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Boris Pasternak  
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*edited by*  
**JOHN WAIN**

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## CONTENTS

	Page
<b>INTRODUCTION BY JOHN WAIN</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>I ENGLAND: FICTION AND THE COMMON SITUATION</b>	
Philistine to Philistine?	<i>Anthony Harsley</i> 11
Reflections on some Aspects of the Experimental Novel	<i>William Cooper</i> 29
Iris Murdoch: The Solidity of the Normal	<i>G. S. Fraser</i> 37
<b>II FACETS OF LITERARY AMERICA</b>	
New England:	
Reflections on a Region	<i>Charles Miller</i> 55
Stevens Posthumous	<i>Roy Harvey Pearce</i> 65
The Iowa Poetry Workshop	<i>Paul Engle</i> 90
<b>III WORK IN PROGRESS</b>	
The Angel of the Graveyard	<i>Jean Garrigue</i> 101
Genia	<i>Michael Hamburger</i> 112
Four Poems	<i>Marnie Pomeroy</i> 136
Diary	<i>David Waggoner</i> 140
Fires	<i>Alan Brownjohn</i> 142
<b>IV EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE</b>	
Aragon at the Crossroads	<i>Dominique Arban</i> 143
Hermann Broch: Poet and Philosopher	<i>Robert Breuer</i> 159
Swedish Letters in Recent Years	<i>Daniel Hjorth</i> 170
Eastern Europe: An Essay for Adults	<i>Abraham Rothberg</i> 183
<b>V VOICES FROM THE SOUTH</b>	
Younger Poets of Australia	<i>R. A. Simpson</i> 203
<b>VI TEST CASES</b>	
'Doctor Zhivago' and 'Lolita'	<i>Marc Slonim</i> 213

## **CONTENTS (continued)**

<b>VII</b>	<b>NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>VIII</b>	<b>LITERARY AWARDS</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>IX</b>	<b>SELECTED BOOKS OF THE YEAR</b>	<b>236</b>

## ILLUSTRATIONS

**Boris Pasternak**

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	<i>Page</i>
<b>Iris Murdoch</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>New England: Emily Dickinson and Herman Melville</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Henry Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Louis Aragon</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Wallace Stevens</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Sara Lidman and Harry Martinson</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Vladimir Nabokov</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Hermann Broch</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Vladimir Dudintsev</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Anthony Hartley and William Cooper</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>John Wain, Marnie Pomeroy and Marc Slonim</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>Antoni Slonimski and Lyudmil Stoyanov</b>	<b>188</b>



## INTRODUCTION

John Wain

WITH this second issue, the present Editor takes his leave of the *International Literary Annual*, which will continue to be published under different editorship.

I find this (if the reader will permit me, for a moment, to slip into the first person) rather a relief. Editing a book of this kind involves one in far too many arguments. I have spent too much time and energy, in the last few months, explaining that the absence from the Annual of any survey of the Bengali epic does not mean that I am plotting to reinstate the British Raj, or that failure to review Finnish theological works does not necessarily brand a man as an atheist. Hardest of all has been the task of explaining that writers sometimes get into the Annual whose prose style is not my idea of the last word in elegance. Yet it is really quite simple. If one invites a writer to contribute something about a subject on which he is a recognised authority, this is not necessarily because one thinks him a refined stylist. In such cases, what is wanted is information, or the expression of an opinion which is interesting because of the source it comes from (and is, therefore, also a kind of information). Any editor has his mental reservations; to say, as a distinguished contributor to this issue does, that experimental writing 'got the push', or to caution the reader against being 'rivetted' by 'metaphysical gobbledegook', may not be quite the critical idiom I would use myself. Nevertheless I welcome it into the Annual; the fact that a widely influential writer expresses himself in this way is a fact like any other, and will be of interest to the thoughtful reader.

To turn to more general matters, the plan of this year's issue

is basically similar to last year's, in that the object has been to provide a fairly wide spread of 'survey' articles and also a number of more specialised and even controversial pieces. The aim is to give the reader some solid information and also to lead him further into critical discussion and challenge him, at times, to disagreement.

Topicality is again the keynote, though as before, we have not felt bound to a narrow conception of the topical, since, if a compilation like this is to be anything but waste paper after a few months, it must offer serious critical treatment of subjects that will gain, not lose, in importance.

Finally, I must point out two differences between this number and the first. The reference side of the book has been enlarged, and so has the space given to original work. The poems can safely be left to speak for themselves; the section devoted to the Iowa Poetry Workshop should be useful in answering the question so often asked in Europe, 'What is the quality of the work done in "creative writing" courses in America?' (This is higher than the average, of course, but it shows what the possibilities are.) Miss Garrigue's novel, from which we print an extract, will probably be completed and published next year, and the story by Mr. Hamburger, though complete in itself, is part of a long prose work which the author hopes to finish within the next two years.

In withdrawing from the Editorship, I wish the Annual a long and useful life. Certainly if it is useful, it will deserve to be long.

## I. ENGLAND: FICTION AND THE COMMON SITUATION

### PHILISTINE TO PHILISTINE?

Anthony Hartley

To think about the culture of one's own time is also to act. Indeed it is the only form of effective action in this domain: an action which is at once analytic and diagnostic, gratuitous and utilitarian. By an apparent objectivity of perception the critic conceals his interest until he is in the happy position of being able to fall upon his readers with a value judgment from the ambush of definitions into which he has lured them. Objectivity is a cheat when anything real is at stake, but it is nonetheless useful to avoid confusion and to penetrate beneath those socially essential shams by which totally opposed ideas are expressed in the same words. Analysis is justified, yet it would be idle to pretend that what I am going to say in the following essay about contemporary English culture does not spring from a number of pre-suppositions on my own part which are probably more easily identified by the reader than by myself. And, since in this field there is little concrete data and no agreed method of investigation, any conclusion arrived at is bound to represent a deepening of those pre-suppositions, of those faint suspicions of a trend which must serve for hypotheses to the observer of his own time.

Basically there are two sides to culture. There is society and there is the artist, and it might be useful to make one general point about each of them before going any further. First, it should be remembered, when discussing present-day English

culture, that a diminution of Britain's world position, its narrow economic margin and a fairly wide-spread failure to realise these facts on the part of its population have led to a difficult political and social situation which is bound to be felt on the cultural level. The narrowing of horizons which has taken place since the war might well be reflected in an intense preoccupation with the politics of the parish pump and a complacent provincialism. In fact, there are some signs that this is what is happening. Secondly, any discussion of culture must begin with the fact that *from the point of view of those producing it* (artists, musicians, writers) their work is essentially individual (not to say aristocratic) and that all such expressions such as 'democratic culture' or 'working-class culture' when applied to actual works of art are misplaced metaphors borrowed from politics or sociology. Goethe spoke for all creative artists when he wrote: 'In my profession as a writer I have never asked myself how I may be of service to the whole? But always I have only sought to make *myself* better and more full of insight, to increase the content of my own personality, and then only to express what I had recognised as good and true.' It is this view of his own work held by the writer or painter or musician which has always made it hard to press him into the service of other ends than that of self-expression. The transcendent importance of the word—*his* word—is the working hypothesis by which he is enabled to continue the arduous and exhausting task of creation. To throw doubt upon it would be to take away his *raison d'être*—just as in the same way a doctor could not allow himself to question the value of saving human life. To consider self-expression as an end in itself may not be philosophically true, but it is artistically necessary.

For some time now a rather confused and scattered discussion on English culture has been going on. As a background to it

there is to be found a growing realisation on the part of intellectuals (and especially young intellectuals) that the social achievements of this country under the welfare state have not been accompanied by any comparable cultural advance. Our cities bear the ravages of false and featureless architecture. Our museums and art galleries receive barely sufficient subsidies from a state that is lavish enough in any other direction. There is still no national theatre. Our system of education may provide new steel and glass schools, but fails to attract enough teachers or to give them adequate pay (cf. the recent spate of novels dealing with the horrors of the Secondary Modern). From the cultural point of view the welfare state has been a failure, and a failure all the more striking in that great things had been expected of it. What has come out of it—Henry Moore, Penguin Books, an upsurge of interest in subjects like archaeology—is not the result of encouragement by a beneficent state, but of individual efforts in a situation which did not exactly help them to birth.

In these circumstances it is understandable that intellectuals (and particularly those to be found in university circles) should feel that something has gone wrong. A minority of them (what might be called the conservative cosmopolitan or French and *foie gras* school) have reacted by polemics against the grey vistas which they perceive in England today. Their mood is that of John Betjeman calling for bombs to fall on Slough, and they yearn wistfully after an Edwardianism which is all more mythical in that it leaves the Fabians entirely out of account. They are of little importance. Their attitude, if thought through to the bitter end, would lead to a type of aristocratic authoritarianism which few of them would be willing to accept once they saw the people by whom it would inevitably be operated. In any case, it is now becoming clear that what is wrong with

English culture is something far more complex than a simple assault on civilised country-houses by beastly egalitarians. Clinging to the past solves nothing, and the normal attitude of the artist is revolutionary, whatever his politics may be.

On the left the discontents provoked by our cultural situation are more significant, more interesting and could be more dangerous to culture itself. In an interesting article in the *Manchester Guardian* (last year) David Marquand described how left-wing circles in Oxford now tend to think of what they want done more in cultural than in economic or political terms. For them Socialism means a spiritual reality which at the moment has more importance than material measures such as nationalisation or pensions. It is remarkable that a specifically political demonstration such as the Aldermaston march took on a character which can best be described as aesthetic—even leaving aside the general incompetence of the anti-nuclear campaign considered as a political movement, this Bohemian side to it almost certainly harmed it in the eyes of professional politicians and public. Moreover, this new primacy of cultural issues is also to be found among people who can hardly be said to be on the left in a political sense. 'Taper' writing in *The Spectator* last August (1958) denounced the indifference of the two main political parties to a series of needful reforms, most of which come under the heading of culture or stem from cultural attitudes. For in a country which has ceased to hold any form of transcendental belief ethical opinion will increasingly be dictated by cultural tone. In practice ethics are a matter of taste, not of considered opinion. The observance or non-observance of the peculiar taboos associated with the English Sunday can be said to be a cultural rather than ethical decision, and the same is true of any position taken up about the licensing laws, the Wolfenden report or street betting. *L'homme moyen sensuel*

of our civilisation will be the product of its culture rather than of its ethics. In the absence of transcendence what is left to us is manners.

Against this general background of an increased interest in culture and its present state in England, various specific interventions in the debate can be considered. Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) describes the kind of working-class life its author once knew and deplores the effect on it of advertising, cheap entertainment and new forms of mass communication. A similar charge of 'exploitation' of the newly literate classes is made in Raymond Williams's book *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958). Mr. Williams is also concerned with the development of a 'common culture' and with getting rid of the we-they cultural relationship, what he calls 'dominative' attitudes held by an 'elite' towards 'the masses'. In a publication such as *Universities and Left Review* the propositions put forward about English culture with varying degrees of intelligence are of three kinds, the latter two borrowing heavily from Mr. Hoggart and Mr. Williams :

- 1) There should be more culture. (More money for the arts, education etc.)
- 2) English culture is being corrupted by unscrupulous commercial interests who have forced independent television on the public and would force horror comics were they allowed to. (Attacks on 'gutter' press, ITV, advertising interests, Hollywood and quite frequently on American culture in general.)
- 3) English culture should be unified. (Down with an elite. Abolition of public schools. The exaltation of art forms like jazz or the cinema assumed to be in some sense more 'popular' than others.)

There is, of course, a fourth proposition: that writers and artists should fling themselves wholeheartedly into the struggle

for some political end. This is usually expressed by recommending a 'commitment', but in practice resolves itself into the old joke about orthodoxy being my doxy. Christopher Logue may appeal in somewhat less than inspired verse for Messrs Amis, Osborne and Wain to take up the standard of nuclear disarmament, but his adjuration would be more effective had he in the past openly expressed the opposition to Soviet intervention in Hungary which we should expect from so idealistic a fellow. John Berger's strictures on British architecture—merited, Heaven knows—will be far more convincing on the day when their author leads an 'anti-ugly' demonstration in Moscow. The idea of 'commitment' is suspect in this country, and this is entirely the fault of those who advocate it. Interested themselves, they can hardly expect much success in weaning others from egotism. Incidentally it should be added that the only result of the wide-spread propagation in France itself of Jean-Paul Sartre's ideas on the task of the writer has been the reduction of the intellectual left to a state of unparalleled impotence. In a recent article in *L'Express* Dominique Desanti recounts with what hesitation and theological hair-splitting she came to leave the French Communist Party. Her first doubts came with Fadeyev's attack on Sartre at the Wroclaw congress: 'Since before the war Sartre represented for us the whole human achievement.' No doubt, but the entire article is an implicit condemnation of the dialectical maze in which French intellectuals, led by Sartre, tried to hide from the truth. And since 'committed' writers in France now seem neither to be producing works of art nor to have any discernible political influence, it may well be asked what the point of their 'commitment' is.

I shall not, therefore, waste any time in talking about 'commitment'. On the other hand, the three propositions I have

listed deserve discussion. They are widely held among intellectuals, and they represent the most active thinking at present going on in left-wing circles. As put forward by Mr. Hoggart and Mr. Williams this nexus of ideas is stimulating and important, as well as having the merit of taking literature and the arts seriously. It is good that we should believe that it matters what people read and see and hear, and, even were this not so, even if the great majority were affected neither by the arts on the one hand nor by commercial television on the other, it would still be necessary to act as though they were.

However, before embarking on this discussion, I feel it would be helpful to define the word *culture* a little more narrowly. For there is one most important distinction to be made: that between *culture* and *a culture*. In the ethnological use of the word, when, for instance, we speak of 'Aztec culture' or 'Dyak culture', there is implied a total, unified way of life informed by common beliefs and made possible by the strongly integrated tribal societies found among primitive peoples. To talk of 'modern English culture' or of 'cultural activities' is to mean something quite different: those creative and largely intellectual activities which are recognised as dictating the aesthetic and, to a considerable degree, the moral tone of a civilised society. When Mr. Williams defines 'working-class culture' as 'the basic collective idea, and the institutions, manners, habits of thought and intentions which proceed from this', he is using culture in its ethnological (or sociological) sense. It can, of course, so be used, but then it becomes important not to carry over into it any pre-suppositions from its original application to primitive societies. This will be clear when we criticise the idea of 'a unified society'. Moreover, in a more advanced community expressions of attitudes such as Mr. Williams's 'basic collective idea' will themselves have been formed by culture in the more

restricted sense. If a vague belief in equality is a part of the British working-class ethos, it is because of Rousseau, because of Bentham, because of Marx—in other words because behind it stands a tradition of radical thought which has filtered down through society until it is reproduced in a more or less unrecognisable form in pub talk of 'we' and 'they'. The culture of a modern society is the result of purposeful and voluntary thought and creative activity in a way in which, say, the traditional attitude of a savage towards menstruation is not. Today's *culture* can produce a *culture* tomorrow, and, if the position of English culture is to be discussed, the emphasis must be on the more restricted meaning of the word, as it is only through a rise in the quality and an enlargement in the dissemination of culture considered as thought, literature and the arts that any improvement of culture considered as a total way of life can be expected. The confusion caused by this terminological difficulty is tiresome and becomes particularly obtrusive when phrases such as 'products of bourgeois culture' are used to describe individual writers or works of art. It is thinkers, writers, artists and musicians who produce a *culture*, whether aristocratic, bourgeois or working-class and not the other way round.

When it is a question of providing more money for the arts and for education the wider, more passive sense of the word culture only enters into the argument as a possible consequence. Everyone who has thought about the matter would, I suppose, agree that the present position of the arts in Britain is in some sense unsatisfactory, though the seriousness of the situation varies considerably with the different activities involved. A writer who has to write in his spare time after earning money by journalism or university teaching can hardly complain of being in the same position as Dr. Johnson. It was only excep-

tionally in the eighteenth and more commonly in the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century that many writers could expect to live by their creative work, and it is probable that anyone who really wishes to write will continue to do so, despite the extra hours at a desk. But, even were this not so, it is hard to see what could be done about it. Literary prizes and state pensions are all very well, but in the nature of things they go to the writer who has already arrived or to the young writer who strikes a fashionable note. The eccentrics, those who are in advance of their time are left out in the cold, and the advent of state or institutional as opposed to private patronage means that the awards, decided as they are by committees and juries, are less likely to be bold and more concerned to avoid criticism. Another aspect of the problem is the difficulty, almost the impossibility, of contracting out of modern society, of becoming a hermit or an anarchist. The pressures of contemporary life are considerable. Some writers are certainly stimulated by them, but equally certainly others are discouraged, while the premium placed on being one's own Public Relations Officer is excessive. Orwell once wrote that the best thing the state can do for a writer is to let him alone, but he might have used the word 'society' instead.

The position is quite different where art of whatever kind impinges directly on the public domain. Matters like a national theatre, the design of new buildings, their decoration with sculpture or painting are legitimately the concern of the state or of various corporate bodies of a semi-public or private nature. Few individuals can do much about even a single building. No company, however rich, would necessarily wish to bother about the general look of a whole London street. These are matters for the state, and it is just in this, its proper sphere of activity, that it is failing to do its duty. Covent Garden, it is true, gets

its subsidy, but there is hardly a hint of a national theatre. We have town planning acts, we have good sculptors and painters, but, apart from a few exceptions (Coventry is the shining example), neither the powers nor the material available have been used to give us beautiful cities. Why is this? As far as town planning is concerned part of the answer is that there is no English tradition of 'urbanisme' and that none will arise as long as a large part of the population regards cities purely as places from which to take the train every night back to a leafy suburban paradise. One has only to live in a town like Manchester to see the damage done to an urban community by a combination of smog and the 'garden city' ideal—it is hard to say which is the more pernicious of the two. Yet this type of consideration only applies in the one instance, and itself is a symptom of a deeper failure.

The reluctance of politicians and public bodies to do anything very decisive towards the encouragement of the visual arts rests, it must be admitted, on a public indifference which, outside specifically intellectual circles, is pretty general. It may take the form of imbecile remarks made by local councillors every time a piece of modern sculpture is acquired by the city museum or of the hearty tomfoolery PRAs see fit to indulge in whenever the name of Picasso is mentioned. At its best it is philistinism; at its worst it is aggressive philistinism which seeks to destroy what it fails to understand. The most convincing effort to explain why this scourge should be felt with such severity in England has been made by John Marlowe in his book *The Puritan Tradition in English Life*. Mr. Marlowe's conclusion is that 'The Puritan conception of art as an optional extra is a conception with which comparatively few Englishmen would be inclined to quarrel, either in theory or in practice. In such matters of utility as town planning, house building and furni-

ture designing there is a strong tendency to let the practical man do the essence of the thing and then, if at all, to get an artist to come along and add the frills. The proper domain of art, it is felt, is in the non-essential things, in the pleasant knick-knacks of life . . . The artist is regarded partly as a public entertainer, like an actor or professional footballer, and partly as an ancillary professional man, like a chiropodist or a beauty specialist . . . What is considered incomprehensible and unacceptable is any claim to regard the fine arts as part of the essential mechanism of life, like sex, or politics, or commerce, or religion.' For Mr. Marlowe this attitude towards art springs directly from the Puritan tradition he is examining, operating, in this instance, through the educational mechanism of the public school system. He sums up: 'On the one hand the Puritan tradition has endowed the English people with strength of will, application of mind, energy of body and a deep sense of responsibility. On the other hand, it is suggested, the Puritan tradition has resulted in a wide-spread and deep-rooted indifference to and even contempt for the element of beauty in the world and, it may be added, in human relations between man and man.'

The most significant thing about Mr. Marlowe's diagnosis (and the whole of his brilliant sketch should be read by anyone concerned about the state of English culture) is that it provides historical justification for thinking that the bracketing of such issues as ugly architecture, failure to implement the Wolfenden report and lack of support for the arts is not merely arbitrary. 'Taper', the Oxford students who are thinking in terms of cultural rather than political progress, contributors to the *Universities and Left Review*—all these people are taking part in an attack on a number of remnants of the Puritan Tradition in English life—an attack which is all the easier in that the in-

dividualistic side of Puritanism has been under heavy fire on purely social grounds for some time. Ethical considerations having dictated cultural attitudes for so long, a reverse movement is now taking place. What the attackers do not, perhaps, entirely realise is that there are desirable Puritan qualities which, if they succeed in their onslaught, are also bound to be destroyed, since no total approach to life can be sustained except as a whole. Were the Puritan element to be completely eliminated from English life, we might expect to find the level of honesty in the civil service falling at the same time as that of architectural beauty rose. It is contradictory or, at any rate, slightly ironical to demand more Puritanism in the police force and less in the divorce laws.

Whatever the alternatives may be, they hardly offer scope for deliberate choice. We shall have more state support for the arts, better architecture and easier divorce laws. We shall probably also have less honesty in public life. Puritanism appears to be definitely on the wane even as a lingering prejudice below the surface of consciousness, and the question is what is to replace it. Are we not in danger of escaping from the Puritan philistine only to encounter the commercial philistine, whose influence would have all the cultural disadvantages and none of the social advantages of that of his predecessor?

To answer this question is to discuss the second assertion which is commonly made in left-wing (and by no means only in left-wing) circles: the assertion that English culture is being undermined, the English working people exploited by commercial interests, whether through the medium of the popular press, television, cheap and nasty books or high pressure advertising.

It must be admitted at once that there is a good deal of truth in this charge. Speaking as a journalist, I should say (though it

is not a particularly agreeable confession to have to make) that England has a popular press which is technically one of the best and morally and culturally one of the worst in the world (incidentally I should except *The Daily Mirror* from these remarks). Mr. Hoggart has an especially damaging comment to make here: 'When I was a boy the older generation of working-class people used often to say, as evidence of the truth of some fact, "Oh, but it was in the papers." That phrase seems to me now almost entirely unused.' This is part of the moral consequences of Lord Northcliffe, and it should be a sobering thought for anyone who calls himself a journalist. What makes it worse is that there is no sign of any move within what should be a profession to try to enforce higher standards: more accuracy, less smear, more respect for privacy, less pornography masquerading as moral indignation (personally I do not mind the pornography, but I do object to the masquerade). Instead we constantly read in the newspapers how useful the newspapers and those who run them are. And if people no longer believe what they read . . . ? But this is a digression.

What is clear is that the charges laid against those handling modern instruments of mass communication are often justified. Their motives are certainly not pure, they do often debase standards for profit, and there is little reason to suppose that they would stop short of circuses in the Roman sense, if, by running an exciting programme on gladiators, they could sell the populace some new brand of bread. On the other hand, the pressures of modern publicity have been known to produce a healthily sceptical reaction (the comments quoted by Mr. Hoggart illustrate this: 'It's all lies in the papers.' 'It's all propaganda in the papers.'), and it may be questioned just how much real harm is done by the TV and newsprint bombardment. The influence of horror comics and gangster films have been much

exaggerated. Research into the effect of films and books seems to suggest that people are not in fact so much influenced by them as might have been thought. Certainly, they are not influenced in any simple way. A gangster film is as likely to sublimate a desire for violence as to produce it.

Moreover, it would be fair to ask those most vehemently opposed to 'commercial exploitation of the working people' by the use of methods of mass communication how they come to regard the victims as fit to vote, if they believe them to be so gullible in other respects. Why should they be able to resist the wiles of a demagogue if they cannot resist the wiles of a commercial for soap powder? Of course, they may be able to resist neither one nor the other, but those most eager to protect them on the cultural level would hesitate to draw the same conclusions on that of politics. Yet a politician is no less interested in his approach to an audience than a manufacturer of tooth-paste or a press-lord.

It would be wrong to pose this question in terms of social class. If commercialism is poisoning English culture, then it is affecting the middle and upper classes quite as considerably as the working people. And there is no sign that the former are showing any reluctance to drain the chalice offered to them. It is precisely in the middle-class subtopias of Croydon or Surbiton that the television aerial waves like a banner. If corruption there is, then we are all of us corrupt in varying degrees and with varying complexity. But is there corruption? Mass communication can be used for good as well as for evil, and some other symptoms—a wider audience for serious paperbacks and serious music—are beginning to appear as the first results of more education and more easily diffused cultural opportunities. What has happened is that universal education has produced a transitional stage in which the characteristic virtues and

attitudes of the illiterate have been lost without being replaced by those of the genuinely literate. This is disagreeable, but was only to be expected, and there is no need to attribute it to a commercial conspiracy.

But, even if a deep and harmful process of brain-washing were going on, what could be done about it? Institute a censorship? There is no need to be too frightened of the word—entire freedom of expression tends to be accepted uncritically these days—but any such control would have to be operated in accordance with an agreed set of ethical principles that simply does not exist in contemporary English society. The most that could be done would be to adopt Aldous Huxley's suggestion of a ban on various techniques which attack the subconscious mind—subliminal advertising, for example. Of course, behind much of the thinking about this problem is the assumption that such a control should be operated in accordance with a set of ethical principles—those of the thinker himself. After the Puritan philistine and the commercial philistine we should then be faced with the ideological philistine who is to be seen in a perfected form in Soviet Russia. And it may doubted whether, from the point of view of the writer or artist, this would represent an improvement. Commercial philistines at least have the advantage that they do not enact legislation. We have not so far been treated to the spectacle of Graham Greene's expulsion from the Society of Authors for mocking at Her Majesty's Intelligence Service.

And this introduces the third and final assertion: the desirability of a 'unified culture'. In so far as this is not merely a disguised attack on inequality in education it would seem to represent a hangover from the ethnological use of the word culture. To have a 'unified culture' in the manner of a primitive tribe or even of the Middle Ages, it is necessary to have a

common ideology at the back of it. The more primitive the society in question, the more highly integrated by a strongly held set of myths and taboos, the more it will correspond to the ideal, the more everyone will share the same cultural experience. In fact, by the thirteenth century, though Dante could be said to have a certain amount of common cultural ground with an Italian serf, he had considerably less than, say, Montezuma had with an average Aztec, and ever since Europe has been increasingly divided into a cultural elite and the rest (the moment at which this division became strikingly apparent we call the Renaissance). Now, as has already been said, in twentieth-century England there is no possibility of a common ideology leading to even a modified community of culture. And it is only the unspoken assumption that unity of culture is the normal state of a society which could lead anyone to suppose that it would be a good thing if there were. Civilisation has always been marked by increasing cultural diversity, and at any time in any society there will only be a relatively small number of people taking part in the activity which dictates cultural tone. They are drawn from all classes, but are liable to find themselves in opposition to the mass of the society, whose presuppositions it is their business to criticise. A 'unified culture' would not mean a 'more democratic' culture (the word is meaningless in this context), but the control and supervision of the genuinely creative cultural elite by an ideological oligarchy. Ikhnaton would be subject to the priests.

The views on English culture we have been considering come mostly from the young intellectual left, and conceal a considerable paradox. On the one hand they represent an attack on the remnants of the Puritan attitude towards culture, a determination to give aesthetic values a more prominent place in English life. On the other, by criticising 'commercial exploitation' of the

working people or by advocating a 'unified culture' they appear to assume positions which require the support of an ideology, by the light of which culture can be judged and self-expression limited. The movement in that case would be from philistine to philistine, and there is no guarantee that the new would not be worse than the old. In fact, any cultural control of the kind implied by stopping 'exploitation' or by establishing a 'unified culture' means a fairly rigorous ethical yard-stick rigidly applied to cultural matters. In this contradiction one can, no doubt, perceive the libertarian and authoritarian trends on the English left, and matters are not helped by a refusal to recognise the indivisibility of cultural attitudes. To will the liberty of the artist on a higher plane is also to will the liberty of the television audience on a lower one. That liberty is the liberty to make a wrong choice: to be corrupted by commercials, to become a juvenile delinquent through reading horror comics, to have badly designed furniture in your house. But if gangster films are to be banned because of their violence, if seaside postcards are to be chivvied off the book-stalls, then logically *Ulysses* and *Lady Chatterley* must expect to suffer as well. And, as Irish experience proves, they suffer worse.

These are the two horns of a dilemma on which the relationship between the artist and society is continually impaled. For the creative artist (and I use the term in its widest sense) the choice is simple. He must choose entire liberty of expression, since that is the primary value of his universe. Otherwise he would cease to be an artist. As to society it must then decide on what conditions it can afford to tolerate in its midst these curious, anarchic beings busily creating the culture of the next generation. But, if it is unable to tolerate them on terms which permit them to do their creative work, then inevitably it is doing its best to sterilise the most fertile seeds of life within itself.

In this curious dialectic we must believe that it is the creator  
who is the active element.

Danke, daß die Gunst der Musen  
Unvergängliches verheißt,  
Den Gehalt in deinem Busen  
Und die Form in deinem Geist.

# REFLECTIONS ON SOME ASPECTS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL NOVEL

William Cooper

AREN'T the French wonderful! Who else in these days could present a literary *avant-garde* so irredeemably *derrière*? *Avant-garde*—and they're still trying to get something out of Experimental Writing, which was fading away here at the end of the thirties and finally got the push at the beginning of the fifties. What a *garde*!

During the last years of the war a literary comrade-in-arms and I, not prepared to wait for Time's ever-rolling stream to bear Experimental Writing away, made our own private plans to run it out of town as soon as we picked up our pens again—if you look at the work of the next generation of English novelists to come up after us, you'll observe that we didn't entirely lack success in our efforts. We had our reasons for being impatient. We meant to write a different kind of novel from that of the thirties and we saw that the thirties novel, the Experimental Novel, had got to be brushed out of the way before we could get a proper hearing. Putting it simply, to start with; the Experimental Novel was about Man-alone: we meant to write novels about Man-in-Society as well. (Please note the 'as well': it's important. We had no qualms about incorporating any useful discoveries that had been made in the course of Experimental writing: we simply refused to restrict ourselves to them.)

In our moments of relaxation from serious plotting, we turned our minds to what final imbecilities lay ahead for the Experimental Novel, if it was allowed to go on—we used to hold a sort of running competition between ourselves. The first place for imbecility was awarded to a stream-of-consciousness novel written in the *second* person—it really was the most imbecile thing we could think of. Believe it or not, fifteen years later M. Michel Butor has actually written it! And got French literary first prizes for it.

Our runner-up was a moment-by-moment sense-impression novel confined to the sense of *smell*. Another fifteen years, and, in Paris, who knows? . . . (it astonished us, for two reasons, that nobody had set up as a Virginia Woolf of the smells. Sense-impressions recorded through the nose, compared with those recorded through the eyes or ears, are (a) more poignant, and (b) further from cerebration—both, one would have thought, recommendations to Experimental Writers. True, such a novel would be harder to write than a visual or aural novel; but we did not believe that Experimental Writers would always be so short of talent that they had to keep on taking the easy way out.) The field in this category of novel is obviously wide open to M. Alain Robbe-Grillet, if only he were not suspicious of smell because 'it implies a penetration into the body by a foreign thing.' M. Robbe-Grillet has just published a novel, *The Voyeur*, which concentrates on visual sense-impressions, on impressions of the eye alone, in fact on impressions of an eye so alone that you feel there's *no head at the back of it*. It couldn't be more avant in the garde of twenty years ago. Also, I can tell you in case you haven't read it, it couldn't be more tedious and arid. In fact, judge for yourself from this quotation, which occurs on the last page but one; though it might equally well appear on any other page, since it bears no relation to any thread of con-

tinuity—I won't say story, because M. Robbe-Grillet is suspicious of story as well—detectable in the book.

'It was a heavy iron buoy, the portion above water constituting a cone surmounted by a complex assemblage of metal stems and plates. The structure extended three or four yards into the air. The conical support itself represented nearly half of its height. The rest was divided into three noticeably similar parts: first, prolonging the point of the cone, a narrow, open-work, square turret—four iron uprights connected by cross-pieces; above this came a kind of cylindrical cage, its vertical bars sheltering a signal light fastened in the middle; and last, topping the structure and separated from the cylinder by a stem which continued its main axis, three equilateral triangles, superimposed so that the tip of one supported in its centre the horizontal base of the next. The whole of this structure was painted a shiny black.'

Well, you see what I mean? *Isn't* it tedious and arid beyond belief? And, come to that, incompetent too—have you really got much idea what that bleeding buoy looked like? Even if you cared? And after all that description? (It is obvious that M. Robbe-Grillet's visual sense is not specially acute, nor is his feeling for solid geometry and structural engineering—which makes for a somewhat infelicitous prospect before a man whose alternative profession to that of visual writer would appear to be that of engineer. Oh dear!) Nevertheless that passage about the buoy comes in as a consequence of M. Robbe-Grillet's literary theory. There are lots more passages like it: in fact they are, in a sense, the main point of *The Voyeur*, as the novel's title indicates. (No, the title does not indicate what a lot of hopeful English readers thought it might indicate.) Vision, pure and simple. Vision as a release from the tragedy of existence. Vision 'uncontaminated', as M. Robbe-Grillet might

write, by 'anthropomorphism.' The eye alone. The eye with no head at the back of it. M. Robbe-Grillet chooses to write this way after reflecting on some aspects of the traditional novel.

### *The 'Character'*

I do not need to tell you that in the hands of the current generation of practitioners of the superannuated art of the Experimental Novel, character is out, right out. Actually we all know it could never be in, because writing Experimental Novels is a retreat from writing about Man-in-Society by novelists who are unable to adjust or reconcile themselves to society; it is a retreat into writing about the sensations of Man-alone by people who cannot stomach present day industrialised society. 'The present age is rather that of the identity-card, the official number,' M. Robbe-Grillet writes. And confuses this state of affairs with a loss in individuality by the said holders of the identity-cards. Does he never look at them: can't he see they're all different? Does he never listen to them: hasn't he ever heard them put their individual points of view? Members of a mass civilisation they may be, but the idea which M. Robbe-Grillet seems to think follows from this, namely that ' "personality" is less important than it was in the free-for-all struggle for selfadvancement' is nonsense; except for those persons, who through despair or incapacity—and there have always been such people—have thrown in their hand. Which is possibly what M. Robbe-Grillet and his like *have* done.

'The fate of the world,' he writes in the cause of his argument, 'has ceased in our time to be identified with the rise and fall of a few individuals, a few families.' As if it ever was! On the other hand, the statement comes well from a citizen of a republic whose fate is still more dominated by a relatively small number of hyper-rich families than any other in Europe, and

which has just seen fit to change its constitution in order to put itself more firmly in the hands of one man. Incidentally it is worth pointing out that intellectuals who have reached the pitch of decadence in which they are riven by anxiety, suspicion, disgust and despair make the ripest of meat for authoritarianism and then totalitarianism. Put it another way—if we have to fight again against having Belsens and Dachaus, how much help are we going to get from people who have already settled for existence itself being absurdity, nausea or nothingness?

### *The Story*

What, more than anything else, makes people read novels?  
The story.

Shrieks of pique, rage and exasperation from some highbrow writers have greeted this answer for decades now. To poor Mr. E. M. Forster, who accepts the answer, it appears so barbarous as to be pre-historic. M. Robbe-Grillet, so to speak flying in the face of Gallup polls, rejects the answer. One can tell him that a notable slump in novel-reading in this country occurred in the thirties, when Experimental Writers began to eliminate the story, a slump in novel-reading among the sort of intelligent people who were interested in highbrow novels non-professionally: for example, the thirties were the time when intelligent men in the world of affairs began to write off the literary world as an enclave given up to playing a private game.

Leave out the story and you reduce your chances of being read. It's just as practical as that. M. Robbe-Grillet will get an example of how practical it is if he writes another novel like *The Voyeur*. Some non-professional people, have no doubt given this novel a chance out of curiosity and because it got a literary prize; but curiosity only lives for once and I doubt if

the *Prix des Critiques* will be repeated. (I have to say non-professional people, because there will always be professional people, like me for instance, who will be paid to read Experimental Novels—though I must say that for reading a second novel as tedious and arid as *The Voyeur*, I shall have to be paid a great deal more!)

M. Robbe-Grillet says 'the critics', whom he seems to dislike, tell him that by eliminating the story he will kill the novel. Why should it take only 'the critics' to see that? Can't *anybody* see that an art-form that has no public doesn't exist? (If it did, we should be confronted with the possibility—interesting, if lunatic—that the world is filled with masterpieces in one or more totally unknown art-forms that we have not had eyes to see.) If people give up reading novels, the novel goes out. And I mean 'people' in numbers that make some sort of sense statistically in the kind of society we live in. For three Experimental French novelists to be reading each other's novels with approval, albeit with difficulty, will *not* keep the novel in.

Now why does M. Robbe-Grillet deplore 'the story' so much? Because the writer, who invents the story, *invents* it—it isn't *true*. And 'the enlightened reader,' who reads the story, discovers this and—horrors! 'he fears he has been led into a trap.' What, may one ask, did the enlightened reader think he was in for in the first place? May he not be presumed to have told a story, part factually true, part factually untrue, himself; and to have felt that for the purpose of conveying some truth, it was worth doing? M. Robbe-Grillet's view seems to me extraordinarily *naïf*, in fact positively *quaint*. But the quaintest thing out is his recording with approval the enlightened reader's turning from 'the sham of fiction' to 'the real-life story—the personal document or "testament".' M. Robbe-Grillet appears to think that in real-life stories and testaments, the authors are out to

tell the truth and nothing but the truth—and succeed. Good gracious me!

### *Form And Content*

'The old shibboleth of form and content has not yet been consigned to limbo,' M. Robbe-Grillet says crossly. Of course it hasn't because, though we all recognise it as an abstraction, an artificial division, we can have lots of useful discourse about novels if we retain it. Novels, some novels anyway, are *about* something; and we can usefully discuss what they are about, and also how efficiently or elegantly, and in what sort of shape, that something is put across.

But no. 'To speak of the "content" of a novel is quite simply to remove the entire *genre* from the domain of Art. For Art contains nothing, expresses nothing.' And furthermore, 'Could it not be argued, on the contrary, that the true writer has *nothing* to say? His task is to create a world, but out of nothing, out of dust . . .' You think this is getting just too silly? It can get further still. 'Finally one is bound to admit—for everything points to this conclusion—that Art is only a Form: but (and we must ignore the less salutary implications of the expression) it is probably the *form of the world*.' (Don't you love the word 'probably' in that sentence?)

However, don't let's be rivetted by this metaphysical gobbledegook, deliciously funny though it is, though not specially original—remember the smile on the face of the Cheshire Cat? Let's ask what's going on?

The answer to this question is that the novel is being made emptier and emptier, less and less interesting, less and less attractive. Anxious, disaffected, despairing intellectuals recognise in present-day industrialised society what they regard, falsely in my opinion, as a general degradation of human per-

sonality through loss of scope for expressing individuality. Falsely, because in the first place it is not general; since for the few people, who, through loss of privilege, have less scope than formerly, there are great numbers who, through longer education and a more comfortable way of living, get *more* scope than they would have got in pre-industrialised society. Though they may only be switching on television, that represents, for them, a step forward, a gain. In the second place, recognising this general degradation of personality when it is not there makes it easier for the people whose purposes it would suit to introduce it. This is why these particular anxious, suspicious, despairing intellectuals are really on the side of totalitarianism. You see, their response towards degradation of personality is acquiescence; in their novels it is taken 150% for granted.

Lastly, there is a perversely destructive note sounding through it all. The novel is to be made emptier and emptier, which will result in its losing the interest and respect of the non-literary part of the intellectual world. The point not to miss is this: not only are these anxious, suspicious, despairing French writers nullifying the novel, but they are weakening the intellectual world as a whole, by bringing one part of it into disrepute. The impulse behind much Experimental Writing is an attack from the inside on intellect in general, made by intellectuals so decadent that they no longer mind if intellect persists—in fact some of them sound as if they would be happier if it didn't.

This attack has a parallel in a phenomenon now current in the scientific world—an attack on science from the inside by scientists trying to introduce theories that have either been long-discarded or are purely fantastic. In any part of intellectual society the decadent are at the present moment of history immediately identifiable: they are plugging a theory that everybody really knows *won't work*.

# IRIS MURDOCH: THE SOLIDITY OF THE NORMAL

## G. S. Fraser

TWELVE years or so ago (it was in the days of rationing, of Crippsian austerity, of the beginnings of the Welfare State, and of mulled Algerian wine at bottle parties) I met Miss Iris Murdoch at an evening gathering in Chelsea. These were also the days of the blouse and the dirndl, and I remember her as being garbed in that fashion, and having beautiful hair cut with a fringe in a long bell-shaped bob, like one of the more *ingénue* early heroines of Aldous Huxley.

I do not know if she had then published anything; but she was introduced to me as a philosopher, and in philosophy I have always had an amateur interest. We talked to each other for a little, and I remember being curiously intrigued at discovering that the philosophers then occupying her attention were writers very much out of current fashion, the late Victorian English idealists, T. H. Green, F. H. Bradley, and Bernard Bosanquet. I have seen her once, at a party in Oxford, since, but never had another proper conversation. And, indeed, I forget now what she told me about the English idealists; but from a study of her subsequent development as a novelist, I can imagine the sort of attitude in them that may have attracted her. Bosanquet, for instance, has this passage in an essay on the relation of his thought to his life :

Well, where in particular are you to find your actual will or mine?

Only in the several successive and distinct decisions of every day, hour, or minute? Surely this is to abandon the idea of a man's will. What you can say, and all you can say, is: 'When one lives with him, and has learned to act and feel with him, one sees that on the whole this is what he wants and what he sticks to.' And for a social body, if you have in yourself any social habit at all, you can say this much at least, and often more. For the social spirit is more fully expressed, because of the needs of external co-operation, than the private will. It is indeed the completer fact in which the private will finds form and stability.

Such a paragraph might almost serve as a summary of the development of Miss Murdoch's art from her first two novels, which might broadly be described as loosely episodic, to her second two, which might broadly be described as tightly platted; more narrowly, they might be described as open-structure and close-structure novels. *Under the Net*, Miss Murdoch's first novel, as its very title suggests, presents an image of the private will, of various private wills, at odds with 'the social spirit' and the 'needs of external co-operation': society is seen as precisely the net which is always coming down to catch us, but which has large or coarse meshes which we can easily escape through, if only later to be caught in other, finer meshes. It has something in common with two novels nearly contemporary with it, Mr. Amis's *Lucky Jim* and even more Mr. John Wain's *Hurry on Down*. Charles Lumley, the hero of *Hurry on Down*, and Jake Donoghue, the hero of *Under the Net*, both find themselves involved in one fantastic adventure after another. Jake Donoghue gets caught in a riotous meeting at a film studio, escapes from a film set with the help of a 'domestic detonator', kidnaps a film-star dog, works as a hospital orderly and helps one of his friends who is a patient there to escape, and in his moments of leisure is usually to be found in pubs talking to intelligent eccentrics. Charles Lumley works as a window-cleaner, a hospital

orderly, a chauffeur, if I remember, and ends up as a gagman for a radio comedy team; he also enjoys drinking with eccentrics.

Charles is driven, however, by two very sharp and specific drives, which partake of the nature of hatred. It would be wrong to say that he hates work, since he will turn his hands to so many things, but he hates work that would enclose him in a stuffy middle-class status; and he hates the spite and snobbery which are the mark, in all countries, of firm class stratification. He is looking for a social group, however small or eccentric, that will give him the illusion of belonging to a small, unstuffy, classless society and for work that will not assume the nature of a killing enclosing routine. Jake does not have to make himself a bohemian, he is one, and the roots of his restlessness seem to lie more in an inquisitive desire to test out the range of his own adaptability than in any strong hatred of any particular atmosphere or milieu; he is less aware that our social structure is wrong, or airless, or oppressive, than that it is rum, and it is the rumness that he is exploring, in a sense even philosophically.

*Under the Net* has thus an odd pervading effect of fantasy, familiar things are seen (as sometimes in films) tilted at odd angles that make them look profoundly different. The mood of *Hurry on Down* is much more that of a series of desperate attempts to escape from the familiar, a familiar seen as intolerable, and not redeemable by acts of imaginative transformation. Jake is also tougher than Charles, and has a more genuine sense of humour; in this, but not in many other ways, he resembles Mr. Amis's Jim Dixon; he is irreverent like Jim, but, unenclosed by Professor Welches, he can take his own irreverence for granted. In his philosophical ruminations, there is sometimes a feeling that the net might be something other, after all, than a net, and he has, in a way, more than either

Charles or Jim a social sense; something drives him at times to meet 'the needs of external co-operation.' He gives less of an effect than Charles and Jim do of deliberately banging his head against a social brick wall, for the pleasure of stopping every now and again, and waiting for the bangs to stop hurting.

In Miss Murdoch's second novel, *Flight from the Enchanter*, a less successful effort than her first, the sense of the use of fantasinating angle shots becomes even more pronounced, but some of the objects and scenes photographed seem in themselves fantastic. If the central themes of Mr. Amis and Mr. Wain are the contemporary worries about work and about class—work a bore, class an imposition, a kind of insolent confidence trick—Miss Murdoch, in this second book, firmly steps in another direction. The characters are scholars, beauties, rich people, eccentrics, power-maniacs, criminals, but nearly all of them have very interesting lives or functions, and it is not any lack of variety in the contemporary scene, or of assurance in contemporary character, that Miss Murdoch is here complaining of. What is wrong with the book, in the crowd of very strange characters who revolve round the sinister Mischa Fox, is, perhaps, precisely the lack of some representative of solid, conventional standards, some symbol for everyday acceptance or discontent. All the characters are surprisers; and a succession of surprises becomes numbing. To be sure, both social and personal life are very odd indeed, nearly always, a little way below the surface, but there *is* a surface.

The social moral of *Flight from the Enchanter* seems to be that today, in a society based on a kind of ultimate scepticism about itself, on a polite agreement not to air disagreement (so that one can be on the most friendly terms with a man for years, for instance, without discovering what he ultimately believes about religion, politics, or the ethics of sexual behaviour, or

even money) anybody might turn out to *be* or to *do* anything. Yet, if there is nobody sane and ordinary in the book, there are many, perhaps too many, charmers; Annette the girl who runs away from finishing school; Rosa, haunted by Mischa, and conducting a simultaneous affair with two Polish brothers, who fall outside the range, in the end, of her practised tolerance and her genuine deep human comprehension, who are at once noble and ignoble savages; the old eccentric lady, Camilla Wingfield, who wears corduroy trousers and drinks champagne out of tea-cups; the pathetic Rainborough, the timid, efficient middle-aged servant, tyrannised over by a secretary whom he at once loathes and finds himself about to make advances to. The sinister Mischa, who is supposed to pull the book together in some way, is a figure of cardboard. The characters are all a little puppet-like; one is reminded often of early Aldous Huxley; but there are, as not in Huxley, moments of violence and hysteria that ring disturbingly true.

People who had enjoyed these first two novels, were disconcerted by the third, *The Sandcastle*. The image of individuals whirling in and out of a dance, odd, comic, sometimes sinister, and either meaningless or very cryptic or latent in its meanings, was abandoned. Instead, Miss Murdoch faced the more difficult problem of finding the fictional equivalent of 'the social spirit . . . more fully expressed, because of the needs of external co-operation, than the private will.' A symbol of these needs (like the symbol of the dredging of the bell in Miss Murdoch's most recent novel) is the elaborate technical detail with which Miss Murdoch describes the getting stuck, in the mud of a river bank, of a car in which there are two lovers. Such an episode is not naively symbolical, of course; that is to say the car does not stand, so to say, for man's frail, uncertain contrivances of purpose or the mud for the inertia of nature, but in other senses

of the word the episode as a whole does symbolise something important about life. Things do not happen (as they often seem to in the first two novels) yieldingly, as if through magic, or by wishing; there is an intractability, there are all sorts of intractabilities, against which we must shove—or decide not to shove against in the end—and this intractability, the unsmoothness with which things go, the cross-grainedness, is a central allowed factor of mature human experience. The novel has a very ordinary theme: a middle-aged husband, a schoolmaster, falls in love with a young girl, an artist (all this is daringly close to stock situations in women's magazine stories). The tentative, awkward, constrained relationship between the two is beautifully done, and so is its frustration, again obvious and probable—it is a mark of maturity in a novelist, or in any kind of imaginative writer, to be able to get us really interested in the obvious and probable—by the hero's loyalty to his wife and family, and his painful awareness of the tensions the affair sets up in them. When the hero's son climbs the high tower of the school, again there is an effect of symbolism of an oblique kind. The dangerous, and daring, and isolating act is a sort of obscure protest against the equally daring and dangerous, and in a sense also isolating, relationship in which his father has become engaged. The affair is broken off—family and work, as in 'real life', are obviously more important than 'romance'—and the private will fulfils itself, though costingly, through its engagement to the social spirit. There is a sense, here, of the solidity of the normal.

The latest and most successful of Miss Murdoch's novels, *The Bell*, might have been called, in Jane Austen's time, *Sincerity and Self-Indulgence*. The heroine, Dora, in the first chapter is in a railway train, going to rejoin her husband, whom she had deserted for six months, at an Anglican lay community,

called Imber Court. She realises with discomfort that her fellow-travellers in her carriage are going there too: 'The sweetness of these ephemeral contacts was precious to Dora. But now it was merely the prelude to some far drearier knowledge.' The novel is partly the story of Dora's growth in self-discovery, in awareness that knowledge need not be dreary, nor are the best contacts ephemeral. She has fallen in love with the hero, Michael: 'She loved him with a quiet undemanding hopelessness. After so much pain and violence, his very inaccessibility was consoling.' The crisis in Dora's development comes about through a visit to the National Gallery after she has decided not to go back to a former lover, of an 'easy going, hard drinking' type in London. She had been an art student, and art had been in her life the one objective experience, the reality in itself; she cannot 'place' other people or give enough value to herself, but pictures are another thing :

It occurred to her that here at least was something real and something perfect. Who had said that, about perfection and reality being in the same place? Here was something which her consciousness could not wretchedly devour, and by making it part of her fantasy make it worthless . . . When the world had seemed to be subjective, it had seemed to be without interest or value. But now there was something else in it after all.

In the end Dora does not go back to her forbidding husband, at least for the time being, or to her superficially attractive but fundamentally much more unpleasant lover. She goes to the West of England to do a little teaching and complete her training in art, in the 'something else in it after all.' Michael, the hero, develops in a more subtle way. He is a man very attractive to women, who has remained emotionally at the stage of romantic homosexuality. A basically innocent romantic

friendship had led to his losing his post as a schoolmaster, and his chance of being ordained as a clergyman, when the schoolboy involved confessed the whole affair to his headmaster. The boy concerned has taken to drink, and is living in a cottage near Imber Court. His twin sister is also staying in the community, she is about to become a nun in the convent, but she is really in love not with God but Michael. Summer weather and West Country cider lead Michael to making mild advances to another young man, Toby, who is staying at the community for a week or two before going up to Oxford. The embittered and drunken Nick persuades Toby to tell the most rigorous and least tolerant member of the community about these advances. Nick then kills himself; and his sister Catherine tries to drown herself rather than become a nun, and give Michael up. The religious community breaks up. The neighbouring convent will take over Imber Court. Michael has to accept responsibility for Catherine, and he will in the end marry her. He also has to realise that what he thought was his religious vocation, the divinely ordained pattern of his life, was largely a matter of projection of a naive self-importance and sublimation of homosexual impulses :

The pattern which he had seen in his life had existed only in his own romantic imagination. At the human level there was no pattern. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' And as he felt, bitterly, the grimness of these words, he put it to himself: there is a God, but I do not believe in him.

A self-dramatising kind of religiousness has, in a sense, been that subjective element which, in Dora's very different case, had made the world seem to be 'without interest or value'; in Michael's different case, it had filled the world with partly

illusory interest and value. He does not remain, however, at the still self-dramatising state of desperation which the passage just quoted suggests :

Very slowly a sense of his own personality returned to him. The annihilating sense of a total weight gave way to a more reflective and discriminating remembrance.

He will marry Catherine; he will give up Imber Court; he will give up the idea that he has a special religious vocation, and find some ordinary work, perhaps schoolmastering, to do in the world. Yet there remains something after all that was not subjective in his religiousness: he attends Mass:

He attended it almost as a spectator, and remembered with surprise the time when he had thought that one day he would celebrate the Mass himself, and how it had seemed to him that on that day he would die of joy. That day would never come, and those emotions were old and dead. Yet whoever celebrated it the Mass existed and Michael existed beside it. He made no movement now, reached out no hand. He would have to be found and fetched or else he was beyond help. Perhaps he was beyond help. He thought of those against whom he had offended, and gathered them about him in this perhaps endless and perhaps meaningless attention. And next door, as it were, to total disbelief there recurred to him the egotistical and helpless cry of the *Dies Irae*:

*Quaerens me, sedisti lassus;  
Redemisti, Crucem passus;  
Tantus labor non sit cassus.*

It is as a story of these two journeys towards self-discovery that *The Bell* strikes me as most impressive, but it is also a very rich study, full of benignant irony, of the nature of community. It is probably Miss Murdoch's training in philosophy that makes

her so deeply, and yet charitably, aware of the ambiguous goals and incentives, both, involved in a fairly amateurish attempt to set up a self-subsisting religious community. There is a debate about whether or not to buy a mechanical cultivator, for the sake of efficiency, or do without it, for the sake of Eric-Gillishness; about whether it is all right to shoot birds, which are threatening the fruit and vegetables the community grows for the market, or somehow unChristian to do so. There are no obvious Christian answers to either question; and there is no obvious Christian answer to the fundamental division between James Tayper Pace, who sees, in the manner of a military disciplinarian, the religious life as consisting fundamentally of rigid obedience to rules, and Michael, who sees it as a spontaneous springing directly from self-knowledge (but he has not self-knowledge enough). From an outsider's point of view, it might seem that the main challenge to practical Christian charity in the community is the neurotic, drunken, self-torturing sinner at its door, poor Nick. But to James Tayper Pace, Nick is merely a squalid nuisance, who doesn't fit in, and would be better away; and to Michael, after he has fallen in love with Toby, Nick is for a time mainly a bore. The fundamental amateurishness of the community, its compromise of temperaments, its ability to evade the obvious, make its final break-up (though it involves Nick's tragedy) not in itself tragic; it expires of unreality.

The convent across the lake has reality, its nuns are not playing a game, and one of them, the Abbess, is for Miss Murdoch a kind of spokesman of reality. Early on, when Michael, out of simple egoism, has wanted to confess the Abbess the whole story of Nick, she has somehow deflected him from doing so; but she talks to him about Nick, when Nick has become a duty he is ignoring, somebody he no longer wants to be

bothered with. And more profoundly perhaps the atmosphere of summer sunshine and the kind of physical vitality and natural joy, which Miss Murdoch conveys beautifully in her evocations of the physical effects on people of Toby and Dora, suggest an element of hopeless artificiality in the whole notion of the lay community; you cannot, perhaps, in the end, be half in and half out of the world. But yet the irony is generous; for the community, after all, *is* pursuing reality, however amateurishly; and Dora, the vague, good-natured pagan, comes in the end, after finding them very quaint, deeply to respect that in them. They somehow show up the fundamental nastiness of her lover, the journalist, who under a mask of tolerant hedonism is consumed by possessive lust and fanatical hatred of all religious experience. He would hate Dora's response to art, if he could understand it. Dora sees that the community are at least deeper and better than he is; and, facing their depths, exploring her own shallows, she finds herself—though, with a firm instinctive tact, avoiding any articulation of belief—not so shallow after all. Michael judges at the end that 'what made her unpretentious also made her irresponsible and unreliable', and notes of her horrid prig of a husband that 'Paul with his absolute demands and his annihilating contempts and angers was the worst partner she could have chosen.' He thinks, too, that it is unlikely that her 'career of crime' is at an end; she will have more affairs. But avoiding submission for the time being to Paul or dissolution of the will in the company of the hedonistic Noel, setting out to complete her education, treasuring her secret love for Michael (and her relief that no other woman will ever live with him at Imber Court, which is to be handed over to the convent), she has more life-wisdom than Michael gives her credit for; more than he has yet acquired. There is lovely symbolism in the butterfly which she rescues in her railway carriage in the first

chapter, cupping it between two hands, and sets free in the station for Imber, letting her luggage be carried on: 'For wisdom is a butterfly and not a gloomy bird of prey.'

I have been looking, in discussing *The Bell*, for broad moral patterns, and I have been quoting these sentences, at which Miss Murdoch excels, that convey briefly at once a description and a judgment of a character or a state of mind; sentences in the tradition of George Eliot and Henry James, of novelists secure in their standards, and not afraid to judge. I have been able to say little about Miss Murdoch's art in telling a story, humour, gift of creating atmosphere, special kind of symbolism in this novel, or general style. The story with its many characters and its elaborate setting is a triumph of plain, traditional craftsmanship. We are given an outline of each character as he or she appears, an outline which does not tie the character down to a static role, but gives us a firm signpost to his subsequent behaviour. The humour is not of a riotous kind but a genial sense of the element of absurdity in all human conduct is there, even at the most tragic or intense or lyrical moments; as when Dora and Toby, having dredged and housed the great lost bell, suddenly embrace each other in it and set its clapper moving. The symbolism of these two rescuing this emblem of a lost order and faith, a rescue described with obsessive technical detail, and ending in their surrender, for a moment, to the very impulses that the bell was, in its clanging, intended to chasten and control, is complex; one has rather a strong feeling that there is latent meaning here, than any firm and clear sense of what the meaning would be. But, like the car episode in *The Sandcastle*, the bell episodes, rescue and sinking, create a sense of intractability in things, sometimes ingeniously conquered, sometimes farcically or wretchedly triumphant. And they add to the overriding impression in the novel of physical reality.

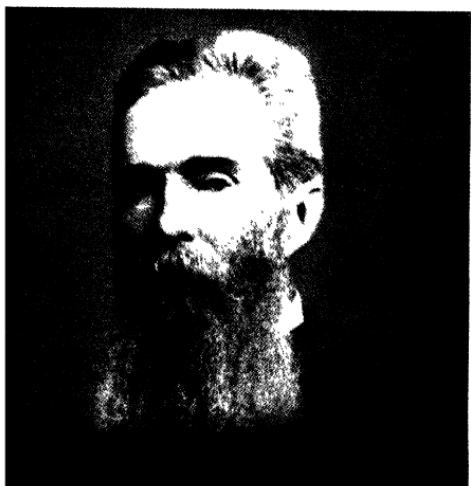


*Studio Edmark / Camera Press*

Iris Murdoch

NEW ENGLAND

Emily Dickinson



Herman Melville



Henry Thoreau



Ralph Waldo Emerson



*Foucault*

Louis Aragon

It is not merely moral pliancies and anfractuosities that we are confronted with, but a hot day, the cramp and dust of a railway carriage on a long journey, the headiness of summer after drinking rough cider, the iciness of the lake water in which the old bell was submerged, in which Catherine almost drowns; at another, less immediate level of physical reality, we could almost draw a map of Imber Court, the lake, and the neighbouring convent grounds. We notice the style, I think, as much as we should in a good novel, that is, occasionally, but not too much. There is a sense there, too, that in adapting the English language to her thoughts Miss Murdoch is wrestling with a medium which she distrusts when it is too easy and slippery, respects when it also, like many other things for her, verges on the intractable. There is an occasional honest clumsiness; she is a natural humourist, but not a natural wit. Wit, indeed, as in Miss Mary McCarthy's books, can be a positive handicap to a novelist, lying like a kind of thin deadening glaze between the reader and the represented life or scene. What one respects, rather, in Miss Murdoch is an air of scrupulous painstakingness. One will never be misled by any desire on her part to say anything merely clever or brightly plausible. Here, again, the philosopher's training no doubt helps. What she tracks is truth.

I would like to end with another quotation from the same essay by Bosanquet :

And so with 'the art of living together.' To have been accustomed to it from day to day, and to the constant discussion and consideration of its failures and its successes and their respective reasons, is a leading which, 'when the principle comes,' as Plato says, introduces you to a world of problems, intricate and arduous enough in all conscience, but one of which the secret is after all in the main an open secret—the concrete unity of life as it is lived, overriding abstractions like bare pleasure or duty, for example, or like the meaningless opposition of mere egoism and altruism.

That is an unfashionable way of 'doing philosophy', but the prose conveys (as Professor Ayer's, say, doesn't) wisdom and largeness of mind. It is perhaps because they help us to 'override abstractions' in this way, in exploring patterns of living through them, that we read novels. A good novel should take us beyond thinness and callowness and snap judgments. Something, certainly, of the wisdom and largeness of Bosanquet's consideration of the 'concrete unity of life' here I find also in Miss Murdoch's successive attempts at the imaginative representation of that unity, 'as it is lived'.

## II. FACETS OF LITERARY AMERICA

### NEW ENGLAND: REFLECTIONS ON A REGION

Charles Miller

MUCH of the world's literature has been born or nurtured within that cradle called the region, and some regions have been especially fertile in the fostering of literature. Perhaps Earth itself should be regarded as a home region in the newly contested cosmos; and more than ever, now, an international attitude is the ideal attitude for earth's citizens; yet, writers humanly refer to their regions as a lucky child refers to his parents. Home, as we say in New England, is the place that must take you in when you have to go there; your region, then, is the place that must receive your homing spirit when it needs a home.

Place names are the smiles and sighs of literature; also they are the signposts of departure, for literature tends to express itself outward and upward from a local home into a larger, more universal zone; but even from the heights, the liberated creator will give his roots a tug of recognition, a humanising recall. The actual flora, fauna, and weather of Stratford-on-Avon have been etched onto the pages of its greatest emigrant. Herman Melville, the eloquently moral mariner, yearned for his adopted New England hills while he hunted the world's farthest waters in search of the largest whale, the very search that he calculated would free him forever of provincialism. Thoreau, the international messiah of local individualism, scatters bits of his single habitat onto all the piled pages of his

twenty-odd volumes, a universal monument vivid with local color. For the literary creator, a region can be an emotional home as well as a most logical laboratory.

'Region' is a familiar word in continental U S A, because the nation's main body is composed of approximately eight geographic master regions, among which New England has the handiest size, the most ideal location, and the brightest history. New England is the smallest region, being a wedgy block of six varied states, the southern point of the block nudging metropolitan New York, and its conifered head pressed up into the Canadian shield; the Atlantic vigorously washes its rocky front, and green Appalachians guard its back.

No other region—not even the plump, farm-and-factoried Midwest, not the troubled, sprawling South, nor the long, Pacific-booming West—can rival New England's combination of wooded, sparsely-peopled upland so close to great centers of culture and industry. In many respects, this paradoxical region is a macrocosm of the western world.

Capt. John Smith named it New England, comparing it to his patron queen's Old England, and other admirers have compared it to other places as varied as Scotland and the lower Tyrol. Even now, New England's northern tier of states, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, resemble wilderness more than they resemble their sister states. In the southern tier, tiny Rhode Island bulges onto the ocean with seven hundred people per square mile; progressive Connecticut, though fairly camouflaged with wooded hills, is half agricultural, half industrial; and rich old Massachusetts, the matron State, embraces the heart of the region and half its ten million people.

One may drive the length of New England over modern highways in little more than a day, passing from the world of fir-tree'd Maine down to the other world of Manhattan. Visitors

from more populous regions of the world are delighted to find our calm hillside villages, two and three hours north of Times Square, up along the Housatonic Valley, and up in the Berkshires. Foreigners are pleased that wild life still thrives in the uplands, that deer and bear survive a few hours away from New York or Boston; this is the America they imagined, compressed into a region containing beavered headstreams and smoggy industrial parks.

While the rivers, lakes, mountains, brooks, ponds, hill farms, and back roads of the region give pleasure and repose to the civil eye, the diversity invites a longer look. The seacoast of Maine alone is more than two thousand miles long, due to its rocky indentations. Cape Cod is a world of sandy beaches by itself, though the tourists and vacationists leave it to itself only in winter time. Coastal fishing, shipbuilding, and food processing continue, in varying degrees. Upland logging, quarrying, dairy farming and light manufacturing are separate aspects of the relatively stable economy. But it is education, literature, and exercise of the arts that has most enhanced the fame of New England.

Many regions famous in world literature are fairly one-man regions, such as Hardy's Dorset, and Twain's Mississippi; but New England was never a one-man region. It fostered among its eloquent chorus a quintet of powerful nineteenth century voices: Emerson, Hawthorne, Dickinson, Thoreau and Melville. To say that the region fostered them is not to say that it spoiled or pampered them: Melville left his hopefully adopted hills in personal defeat; Dickinson died before her trunkful of treasures was distributed to the world; Thoreau began to be recognised only at the end of his life; Hawthorne made repeated journeys toward an easier living; and it was canny, clerical Emerson who got the most fame and most security

from his region. However, the personal fate of these particular writers is not the point, any more than it is with Thomas Hardy: the point is, that the region acted upon them and they acted upon the region, as one uses a local laboratory for universal creation.

Henry Thoreau the thinker and do-er, who lived for a time beside one of Massachusetts' many ponds, had received a classical education at nearby Harvard University. Great authors of the timeless world were carried into the woods in Thoreau's head, and a few waited upon his plank table, deathless in their original tongue, Homer among them. Thoreau deplored the 'common' schools as 'Schools for infants only,' and he proposed the creation of 'uncommon' schools for the continued education of adults. He advised Concord to spend less money on politics and more on the town library; he reminded New England that it could afford to 'Hire all the wise men in the world to come and teach her, and board them round the while, and not be provincial at all. That is the uncommon school we want.'

Today, Thoreau would be pleased to find hundreds of free libraries in all corners of New England, and to know that dozens of colleges and universities, in all our regions, have a practise of hiring as many wise men as they can get from all corners of the globe. Perhaps we have moved in the general direction pointed out by one enlightened regionalist.

Thoreau was deeply concerned with the purpose of man's existence on earth, and specifically concerned with man's fate in the new world. He pointed out that men of free will had emigrated to New England for the purpose of living a different kind of life; repeatedly, he spoke of Utopia, and then demonstrated it by living in harmony with the natural world, while remaining the most civil and intelligent savage in the countryside! Far from being a soft savage, he challenged his govern-

ment's right to tax him for purposes of war, and agreeably went to jail for it. Mahatma Gandhi declared that his life was influenced by Thoreau's essay, 'On The Duty of Civil Disobedience'; a declaration which would please its New England hermit-author.

While Thoreau was recording his thoughts in the woods around Concord, Melville was tiring of his life in Manhattan, where he was famous and popular. He brought his family up to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, near to the place of his birth and even nearer to his ideal landscape. He wanted to garden and to write his masterpiece; he did both. While engaged with family, with garden, and with the greatest of all whale hunts, Melville couldn't know that fate was ripening a bitter crop for him to harvest: his hopeful friendship with Hawthorne proved cool and incomplete; his supreme *Moby Dick* was received by a few puzzled readers—including his editors, who chided him for writing such a thing, and paid him less than three hundred dollars for his trouble: and, finally, his New York publishers suffered a fire which destroyed the printing plates, and most of the remaining volumes of his works. Thus, Melville left his ideal region in defeat, and made but little effort to further or champion his oceanic holdings in literature. Taking refuge in mere life, one of art's greatest adventurers quietly embraced oblivion.

Another poet in neighboring Amherst outdid most poets of the world in the lonely art of personal oblivion; Emily Dickinson was a glorious spinster who spent most of her life in a village house and garden, leaving an eloquent treasure to be handed to the world after her death. Her terse notations on the human spirit might have been written in any region, but the natural garden of New England made a perfect setting. Within the exciting seasons, under our capricious climate, her

residence became a regional park in eternity, haunted by the birds and beasts of a world both snowy and green, with a hospitable graveyard in the background. A perfect habitat for a female hermit, with real people patrolling the village, like symbols of people, beyond her fence—ah, Emily!

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne had more fame and more worldly security than their great contemporaries, because they pursued courses contiguous to their own creative works. Emerson lectured and edited and kept in close contact with English writers; Hawthorne managed to get various commercial and governmental posts; yet both of them were immersed in New England, and breathed it from every pore of their literary beings.

Behind the separate members of the region's quintet was a scattered chorus, which sang with more atonality than harmony: Longfellow, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Louisa May Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Richard Henry Dana, Bryant and Whittier; and the historians, Francis Parkman and William Prescott; and the lexicographer Noah Webster; and Daniel Webster, the literary, definitive statesman. Later, Maine produced a princess of regionalism, Sarah Orne Jewett. And all through that eloquent century, the region was enriched from time to time with important adoptees, among whom were Mark Twain, Wm. Dean Howells and Henry James.

It is notable that none of New England's greatest writers had purely literary careers, none of them had easy careers, if any career can be called easy. All of them lived in turbulent days of a divided and adolescent republic, all of them confronted an array of choices, all of them used their region as a frame of reference. It is said that to be an American means to be free, to be an individual confronting a forest of opportunity, whole regions of option; and the artist, most free and most lonely,

chops a path into his own kind of forest, and digs his region in order to divine the world; it is the non-artist who goes down that groove which the politicians and rotarians have polished to a sociological gloss with brand new bills.

The New England countryside, now, is an artist's landscape, a lonely landscape enlivened with eloquent ghosts; the world (decentralised factories and non-garden housing developments) is just over the hill. There are no sidewalk cafes; there is no literary capital, Emerson's old Concord being the last. If the region lacks a single heart, it has proper nerve centers, such as Cambridge, New Haven, Hartford, and Cape Cod. And if a literary man from Mars were to land on a New England clover-leaf or on a village street, commanding the local poet-AND-fiction corporal, 'Take me to your leader!', that poor poet, bless his disparate soul, wouldn't know to whom to turn. Northward, to Robert Frost, the bucolic old wizard? No! . . . too far north! Cityward, to J. P. Marquand, the smoothly successful teller of regional tales? Oh, no! There is no leader, nor was there one, ever.

Yet the region is full of writers, each one shifting his weight in a crowd of energetic hacks and assorted educators. There is a full crop of poets: not only Frost in Vermont, Conrad Aiken on Cape Cod, but there was Wallace Stevens in Hartford. Stanley Kunitz, Richard Wilbur, Louise Bogan, Robert Lowell, John Ciardi, Winfield Townley Scott, and Elizabeth Bishop are all native and associative to the region. So were Amy Lowell, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Edna Millay, Robert P. T. Coffin, and Genieveve Taggard. Still others identify themselves by residence or ancestral kinship to the region, including E. E. Cummings, Archibald MacLeish, Mark Van Doren, Richard Eberhardt, Leonie Adams, and Howard Nemerov. Today, T. S. Eliot's name is associated with the Harvard that helped educate

him and encourage his early works; Harvard, the alma mater of Henry and Will James, George Santayana, has had more impact on our letters than any other American university.

This casual census must include backward Vermont's contribution to progress, John Dewey, who philosophised on man's relationship to environment. Another eminent resident was Rudyard Kipling, who married a Vermont lady and spent four productive years near Brattleboro; there he wrote, among other things, 'Captains Courageous', right under the noses of our regionalists. Then there was Eugene O'Neill, who loved the Cape Cod that launched him, and loved his sea coast, to which he returned to make a last stand before making his longest journey.

New England has been a homescape to families such as the Charles Beards, the Carl and Mark Van Dorens, and the Benets. A subsistence farmer in Maine, named Erskine Caldwell, wrote some of his best stories about that region, before he moved to suburbia in Connecticut. Lately, John Steinbeck tried our region, as did Maxwell Anderson; and Thornton Wilder returns to it periodically. Pearl Buck spends time on her Vermont mountain estate. And it seems that writers all tend to settle in separate localities, in deference to the countryside rather than its literary constituents; but now three famous writers are cooped up in one Connecticut township, adjacent to other and older writers: Arthur Miller, Norman Mailer and William Styron. Meanwhile, the urban-bred and completely detached J. D. Salinger is at home in a Vermont landscape.

Thus, natives and transients accept our geographical hospitality; it is a hospitality that can be free. For five decades the Edward MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire has awarded full fellowships to better creative artists who come to work at the MacDowell studios; other 'colonies' in the nation have a

similar policy. Moreover, adventurous artists find that it is possible to 'hole up' in an economically easy village. One young couple from Manhattan acquired an abandoned farm in the Green Mountains, rebuilt the farmhouse, made subsistence farming support them, and proceeded with their family and their writing careers. Others have squatted in deserted houses, in vernal versions of a free garret with a view—and a garden. Writers, from the Thoreau who once worked as Emerson's houseman to Jake Doe who is current proctor at Ivey College, have made out in the region where woodchopping, snow-shovelling, and gardening are ordinary chores.

A final paradox: New England's nineteenth century was eloquent with prose, and quiet with poetry; but its twentieth century, so far, is the opposite, with poetry blazing from every corner, and its fiction lying groaning, or merely lying. The causes are plain: our poets have dug the past (as artists must) in order to plant meaning upon the present; our fiction writers have ignored tradition and its basic ideals of art, in order to make money. The region is full of hacks—no reflections on them! For years, the clans of merciless provincialists have hacked at ye olde meetinghouse, mill pond, and pioneer until the region reeks of colonialitis; the 'picturesque' is their theme, the tourist their dupe.

New England is no myth. It is a dense, complex, and diverse region, a macrocosm that challenges a deep look. Despite the exemplar writing of the last century, story tellers have teased but not penetrated our native topography. To wit: our fishing ports and fishing fleets are scaly from fictional neglect; our un-sung loggers wrestle with chain-sawed trees in upland oblivion; the foreign 'colonies' in the region's cities are richly transplanted from the old world, complete with vivid open markets, local folklore, and world champions . . . all ignored;

lumber mills near snowy peaks and world-famous quarries wait to be mined; tended tobacco fields smoulder in a valley of silence. No, it's not the artists' duty to sing home-sweet-region; but plainly it is his privilege, as the poets have proved. Today, your region, tomorrow, the world!

Two recent novels displayed some of the durable qualities found in our poetry. John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle*, glows with family-tree'd life. Emanating from the author's native seacoast, and ranging far, the work pointed a methodical direction if not a remarkable depth. Another first novel, Clara Winston's *The Closest Kin There Is*, remains a minor classic of the hill farmers, as well as a metaphor of regional incest; it is a bitterly beautiful story, and as universal as Hardy. The wide and literate audience that received these works, is waiting for others.

## STEVENS POSTHUMOUS

Roy Harvey Pearce

I GATHER, from the evidence of Mr. Frank Kermode's noble tribute to him published in the London *Spectator* last year (3 October 1958), that even the best British readers still haven't caught up with Wallace Stevens. And this is generally true among American readers too, and in much the same way. Rather uncomfortable with poetry which is quite insistently philosophical, we have been able to acknowledge as one of our own just that Stevens whom Mr. Kermode so well described as the poet of the 'unpredictable balance.' This is the Stevens whom we disclose to ourselves when we refer all his poems back to those in his first collection, *Harmonium* (1923, 1931). This is he whose essential subject was the adjudication, through the act of the poem (as he liked to call it), of the demands of the imagination (our power as subjects) and of reality (the substance of radical otherness upon which that power must work and so somehow expend and realise itself). But it is possible—I should say, necessary—to look at Stevens otherwise; to see the poems of *Harmonium* as initiating something that culminates in the very last poems, principally those centering on 'The Rock,' which gives its name to the last group in *The Collected Poems* (1954). It is as though the final Stevens were latent, or immanent, in all the work before 'The Rock' and the other poems of its group, most clearly so in the poems of *The Auroras of Autumn* (1950)—some of which, incidentally, are included in the Faber and

Faber *Selected Poems* (1953). This final Stevens is the one with whom, posthumously, I want to deal here.

We cannot, I think, afford to continue to read Stevens as in our time primarily the exquisite balancer, the poet's poet, the sublime artificer—and withal the great walker on the tight rope of language. He may have been all these, but only secondarily, as a means to being something else: a poet whose peculiarly and traditionally American fate it was to meditate the power and import of poetry and its affiliation with that sort of culture which had never quite been able to bring itself to accept it as an authoritative institution. Above all, Stevens was the poet of our extreme situation, all the more telling as poet because he would never let himself conceive of our being in any situation except the one in which we were (and are). He came finally to want to make poetry a means of saving man for himself: a not unusual enterprise in our time, perhaps—but one which Stevens pushed to its farthest humanistic limits. He was a Culture Hero—a Prometheus who claimed not only that he had stolen fire from the gods but that he had given it to them, as he had invented them in the first place. (He noted in his commonplace book—which his editor has recently given us, under the name of *Adagia*, in the *Opus Posthumous*—‘This happy creature—It is he that invented the Gods. It is he that put into their mouths the only words they have spoken’).

To be an American, then, meant to be a man of the western world—only more so: luckier than some, no better or worse for it, fated to be what one was. Above all, it meant to be aware of the difficulty of being a poet in a community which, in its conception of itself, could find no proper place for the poet and that ineluctable humanism which it was his vocation to cultivate. And Stevens was quite conscious of being an American poet; in a sense his poems, taken all in all, constitute a bota-

nising of American culture as it might be iconic for all that Western European culture from which it is a late, and forced, growth. (Those who doubt this and can't quite sense it in the poems should look at his answers to some questions put to him in *Focus 5*, 1950.) He speaks through French symbolist poetry and poetics as, say, Emerson spoke through German romantic philosophy—translating the words, the techniques, and the modes into something which, by virtue of being his own and his culture's, will be the world's. Stevens' true ancestors in poetry are Poe, Emerson, Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Robinson. Standing in opposition to Pound, Eliot, and their epigones, he is, as we can see in brief retrospect, at the center of a group among whom we could number Aiken, Cummings, Marianne Moore, Crane, and Williams—and latterly, Theodore Roethke, who concludes his 'Rouse for Stevens' :

Roar 'em, whore 'em, cockalorum,  
The muses, they must *all* adore him!  
Wallace Stevens,—are we *for* him?  
Brother, he's our father!

All these too were, and are, poets of the 'unpredictable balance'—all of them Adamic (in the sense of the word that R. W. B. Lewis has recently defined for us), 'Romantics', bound and determined to push toward realisation that belief in the radical freedom of man which was one of the latent productions of their culture. In their quite various ways they would be poet of him who is, in Whitman's celebrated inscriptive words, 'a simple separate person,/Yet . . . Democratic, . . . Enmasse.' For it is his way with that fateful 'Yet'—when, having conceded that man's existence is split between the individual and social, between self and the other, he immediately denies the concession out of the strength of having made it—it is his way with that 'Yet' which

makes Whitman archetypal for American poets, Stevens among them :

In the far South the sun of autumn is passing  
Like Walt Whitman walking along a ruddy shore.  
He is singing and chanting the things that are part of him,  
The worlds that were and will be, death and day.  
Nothing is final, he chants. No man shall see the end.  
His beard is of fire and his staff a leaping flame.

('Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery,' 1935)

For poets such as these truly nothing is final. For them orthodoxies of all kinds, the stuff of history, the materials of culture, above all myths—all such have to be ordered, tested and so transformed by the poet's sense of himself. (In notes he prepared for Renato Poggiali's Italian translations of some of his poems, Stevens called himself an 'anti-mythological' poet.) The balance between the claims of the other and the claims of the self could be only unpredictable; indeed, the balance (which is as good a word as any for the final criterion for an achieved poem) could be right only if it generated as one of its formal effects a sense of that unpredictability: that contingency and plenitude. But the balance was also perilous; and the poets who evoked it—as we can say, looking at them retrospectively and from a safe distance—had somehow to undergo the perils and to convince themselves that they had come out whole. Even if nothing could be final, they had at least to postulate some sort of end toward which their poems would eventually take them. Thus the ghastly and creaking philosophising of Poe's *Eureka*; the moonmist vagaries of Whitman's and Emerson's transcendentalism; the constricting Puritan neo-orthodoxy which lies just beyond Emily Dickinson's poems; and their as dubious equivalents in the work of so many of Stevens' peers. The point is that Stevens too wished to move beyond unpredictability and

that the later poems and essays show him precisely trying to do so. But his strategy was his own : through the act of the poem to its essence; through poetics to ontology; through the poems he could make now to their beginnings and the ground (his term in 'The Rock', meant in both its literal and technical sense) of their very possibility. In short, during his later years, Stevens strove to find in poetry its own excuse for being, and thus for the being of him whose poetry it was. Its end, he concluded, was in its beginning. Saying this, he constructed what I take to be a major apology for poetry in our time. More important, he constructed a major apology for Man—Man for Man's sake. And it is the conditions and terms of this apology which I want briefly to examine here. We can now, posthumously, let ourselves look at Stevens entire.

Surely, as poet of the unpredictable balance, Stevens' achievement is a great one. Above all, it leads him, and it should lead his readers with him, to a sense of the 'use' of poetry. Yet it is precisely this notion of 'use' which has put some critics off Stevens' middle and late poetry. But it is there, nonetheless, as we can see if we but recall, in roughly chronological order, some of his principal poems as they work toward a theory of 'use'. I suggest this list: 'Peter Quince at the Clavier', 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird', 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds', 'Sunday Morning', 'Asides on the Oboe', 'The Idea of Order at Key West', 'The Poems of Our Climate', 'Credences of Summer', 'Notes toward a Supreme Fiction', 'Esthétique du Mal', and 'The World as Meditation'. What these poems, taken as a continuing series, issue into has been beautifully put by Professor Louis Martz, in what seems to me to be the best general essay on Stevens that we have been given. (The essay appears in the English Institute *Essays* volume for 1957 and in the *Yale Review* for Autumn 1958). The ending of Professor Martz's essay par-

ticipates in the triumph of the poems whose achievement it celebrates :

You sit in a chair, say, admiring the beauty of your four-year-old daughter: you call to mind certain resemblances between her and her absent mother, between her and your imagined image of your self, between her and your memories and pictures of grandparents. You think, too, of certain painted images of children by Renoir or Romney; you think of Andrew Marvell's Picture of Little T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers; you think of the dogwood that bloomed last Spring and of the zinnias now blooming outside. And for a moment the object toward which all these resemblances converge, or from which they infinitely extend—for a moment the object becomes a vital center through which the sense of life is composed, final: 'completed in a completed scene,' as Stevens says. Such is Wallace Stevens' *World as Meditation*, a world where the poet may adopt the words of Valery's Architect and say, 'By dint of constructing, . . . I truly believe that I have constructed myself.'

It may well be that this is as far as we can go with Stevens: this stage where we not only accept the division between the imagination and reality (in Stevens' well-known terms) but the necessary, in sheer humanistic terms, engulfment of the latter by the former. To be sure, Stevens wanted it to be this way, but for him this way was penultimate to a further way—a final way, his final way. This was the way that men (he wrote often in the dust-jacket notes to his volumes: 'by poet I mean any man of imagination') might come to transcend, in a creative act, the division of reality and imagination and, transcending it, might know it in all its superb necessity, and so accept it. Accepting it, he would accept himself—one forever with the rock of his world. To complete the series of principal poems which I gave above I offer 'The Rock' whose name, as I have said, Stevens gave to the last group in the *Collected Poems*. And I propose to

deal mainly with it here, and along with it, some other late poems, so as to try to catch us up with Stevens.

His drive was always toward something analogous to religion; yet he was always ineluctably a humanist. (Otherwise: why the oxymoron in such a title as 'Notes toward a Supreme Fiction'?) He opted for—let us say it—a kind of atheism: at least when considered from the point of view of any orthodoxy for whom the Supreme, by definition, is not a Fiction. (But there are atheists and atheists: as someone has said, those who don't believe in God and those who hate Him.) Stevens' atheism is that of the protagonist of 'Sunday Morning,' only he cannot bring himself to live on nothing more than cockatoos, oranges, sunshine, and dreams. He will face the worst—and does so in such a poem as 'Esthétique du Mal'. (Even the problem of evil is somehow bound up with fictions, to be comprehended aesthetically.) He will, if he can, go all the way to reality; he will see what is left when imagination imagines itself, however temporarily, out of existence. It is the later Stevens, the poet who sought to see what lay, posthumously, beyond poetry—and therefore antecedent to it—whose achievement transcends that of comprehending the unpredictable balance of things. This Stevens wrote in his commonplace book, 'Reality is the spirit's true center'. Somehow, somewhere, the transformative act that was the poem had itself to be transformed, so as to reveal the source in reality of the spirit's (the imagination's, the mind's) power to work the transformation.

Such was the effort and hope of Stevens' later life. Thus the single-minded intensity of the critical and philosophical writing to which he gave himself. Thus his late concern, as he wrote in a letter of 1954, finally 'to formulate a theory of poetry that would make poetry a significant humanity . . . a normal vital field for all comers'. Thus the dialectical struggle apparent in

such late long poems as 'An Ordinary Evening in New Haven', 'The Sail of Ulysses', 'A Primitive like an Orb', and the title poem in *The Auroras of Autumn*. He longed to write, about (which perforce would be to write) what he so often called the essential, or the abstract, poem—that poem beyond poetry, that ultimate expression of the Supreme Fiction. Too often when he strove to write about it, he was forced into an abstractive language and syntax so close to prose that it has an analytic, hesitantly discursive, rather than a creative (or re-creative) function. His failures are in the most profound sense failures of the imagination. He would appear to have wanted to write 'logically', to move beyond the technique of connection-by-rhetorical-inference which characterises such explicitly philosophical poems as 'Notes toward a Supreme Fiction' and 'Esthétique du Mal'. His desire—and his rigorous honesty—makes for poems that are concerned with the difficulty of making, and possessing, poems. This, for example, is the twelfth section of 'An Ordinary Evening in New Haven':

The poem is the cry of its occasion,  
 Part of the res itself and not about it.  
 The poet speaks the poem as it is,

Not as it was: part of the reverberation  
 Of a windy night as it is, when the marble statues  
 Are like newspapers blown by the wind. He speaks

By sight and insight as they are. There is no  
 Tomorrow for him. The wind will have passed by,  
 The statues will have gone back to be things about.

The mobile and the immobile flickering  
 In the area between is and was are leaves,  
 Leaves burnished in autumnal burnished trees

And leaves in whirlings in the gutters, whirlings  
 Around and away, resembling the presence of thought,  
 Resembling the presences of thoughts, as if,

In the end, the whole psychology, the self,  
 The town, the weather, in a casual litter,  
 Together, said words of the world are the life of the world.

It would follow that the 'real' poem somehow is always behind the poet; that when the poet speaks of having spoken it, it too has already 'gone back to be a thing about.' But then how may we know—as we do—that more poems will come? How can we be sure—as we are—that we can yet order our world into poems? How are we assured that there is an ultimate poem, before as well as behind us, which will be an ever-fresh source of the poems we need, if we are to live fully as men? Such questions are crucial not only for Stevens' poetry and his poetics, but for the history of that American culture of which, as it seems to me, they constitute such an important segment—because they are so searching, so deliberately representative, so totally available, and so revelatory. They reveal him who for Stevens had to be the most representative of men: the poet. And he was perfectly clear in what he demanded of the poet: '... we seek/ Nothing beyond reality. Within it,/Everything...' ('An Ordinary Evening', Section IX). Or, in the words of another commonplace book entry :

The relation of art to life is of the first importance especially in a skeptical age since, in the absence of a belief in God, the mind turns to its own creations and examines them, not alone from the aesthetic point of view, but for what they reveal, for what they validate and invalidate, for the support that they give.

Revelation, validation and invalidation, and support—how

will poetry give them to us in the future, when it is a poetry of Man, not of God? The questions are radical: How is poetry possible? How is (in the phrase from 'Asides on the Oboe') that 'impossible possible philosophers' man', the poet, possible? How is poetry possible in the modern world? How is man possible?

Stevens' answer is sure: 'Reality is the spirit's true center.' Which is to say, if we will but think of the history of his poetry and its concern with the unpredictable balance, that ultimately, existing as a mode of pure possibility, there was *the* poem in itself identical with *the* man, and these in turn identical with reality. Is this so much verbiage? In a sense yes, but not in a damaging sense. For, in Stevens' thinking, it was only through language (most generally, the media of the arts) that one could meditate these ultimate problems and conceive of this ultimate integrative poem.

And, as he declared over and over again in his later poems, such a poem must inevitably be conceived of. As here, for example :

This day writhes with what? The lecturer  
On this Beautiful World of Ours composes himself  
And hems the planet rose and haws it ripe,

And red, and right. The particular question—here  
The particular answer to the particular question  
Is not in point—the question is in point.

If the day writhes, it is not with revelations.  
One goes on asking questions. That, then, is one  
Of the categories. So said, this placid space

Is changed. It is not so blue as we thought. To be blue,  
There must be no questions. It is an intellect  
Of windings round and dodges to and fro,

Writhings in wrong obliques and distances,  
Not an intellect in which we are fleet: present  
Everywhere in space at once, cloud-pole

Of communication. It would be enough  
If we were ever, just once, at the middle, fixed  
In This Beautiful World of Ours and not as now,

Helplessly at the edge, enough to be  
Completely because at the middle, if only in sense,  
And in that enormous sense, merely enjoy.

This poem, collected in *The Auroras of Autumn*, is called, appropriately enough, 'The Ultimate Poem is Abstract'. Necessarily, the wit and luminosity of the *Harmonium* poems is almost entirely given up once and for all—as it had begun to be as early as *Ideas of Order*. The poet-lecturer wants more than what he composes, himself in his world. He wants to find himself in the world as it is beyond composing, as he could be if he did not have to compose. This poem, in fact, is minimally composed; it develops only by exhausting itself and its composer, who wants only to bring himself to the point where he has nothing to say, where something will be said for him. Most of the poems in *The Auroras of Autumn* are of this order, I think: exercises in the exhaustion (trial by combat as it were) of the urge to compose. Thus their peculiarly abstract quality—deriving from the obvious fact that they are intended to be abstractive. (I think of the sculpture of Henry Moore and all that is implied by those pregnant hollowed-out spaces; or, alternatively, of the work of American 'action' painters and all that is implied by their 'acts': as though spaces, or acts, could be made somehow to argue discursively for their own existence.) In such poems, the writer wants, even at the cost of abstracting

himself from his composition, a glimpse of the ultimate certitude that will derive from a confronting of the ultimate poem.

Certainly, to speak of the ultimate poem thus, as 'An Ordinary Evening in New Haven' (which was collected in *The Auroras of Autumn*) declares, is inordinately more difficult than to speak of poems already written. For poems already written may always be referred back to their substantial subject-matter, to that time before the mind had worked its transformation on reality. But the ultimate poem is one, which, like the ultimate man, exists only by virtue of the mind's ability to abstract forward, as it were, and to partake, through the abstraction, in its own potentiality to make more poems and to realise itself in all its humanity. In short, the Supreme Fiction, the 'impossible possible philosophers' man' ('Asides on the Oboe') the ultimate poem—these are the grand postulates of the ego. (Stevens once remarked in his commonplace book: 'God is a postulate of the ego.') Postulating these, the ego guarantees its own continuing existence; and it reveals its meaning to itself in those creative acts it performs out of its rockbound faith in its own ability to make such postulations.

Stevens put the matter explicitly at the very end of a late essay he hoped to publish in a technical philosophical journal but which was published only in the *Opus Posthumous*:

' It is as if in a study of modern man we predicated the greatness of poetry as the final measure of his stature, as if his willingness to believe beyond belief was what had made him modern and was always certain to keep him so.

('A Collect of Philosophy')

And late in his life, in an essay—'Two or Three Ideas'—addressed to teachers, he could still insist that in poetry, by virtue

of its being one kind of creative act among many, could be found the central principle for them all: '... we use the same faculties when we write poetry that we use when we create gods or when we fix the bearing of men in reality.' More important, such a conclusion could be reached only through poetry. For only through poetry could man postulate that ultimate poem which was the source and the ground of all such 'faculties.' At this point, we must consider 'The Rock' (1950) which furnishes us the great example of Stevens' final meditations and the concluding stage in his apology for poetry.

The first section, 'Seventy Years Later', a wise old man's poem, begins:

It is an illusion that we were ever alive,  
Lived in the houses of mothers, arranged ourselves  
By our own motions in a freedom of air.

Systematically the sage confronts the evidences of his life in the past (even the 'sounds of the guitar') and acknowledges that now it can be said that they 'were not and are not.' The past was

An invention, an embrace between one desperate clod  
And another in a fantastic consciousness,  
In a queer assertion of humanity . . .

It was a 'vital assumption' and was realised in a sense of 'being alive', being alive then, not now. Reality was a 'rock', covered by the 'green leaves' produced by 'an illusion'.

The second section, 'The Poem as Icon,' begins:

It is not enough to cover the rock with leaves.  
We must be cured of it by a cure of the ground  
Or a cure of ourselves, that is equal to a cure  
  
Of the ground, a cure beyond forgetfulness.

The cure will come from the leaves themselves, as they bud, bloom, bear fruit, and we eat them.

The fiction of the leaves is the icon

Of the poem, the figuration of blessedness,  
And the icon is the man. . . .

The poem is thus the means to moving beyond poetry, beyond illusion, beyond vital assumption, beyond the collectivity of iconic men, to Man. It is the means, as it is consumed, as in living we consume ourselves, of directly confronting the rock of reality and of knowing what we are, as and where we are. It would annihilate all that's made, so as to evoke at once the conditions, the substance, and the act of making.

Thus, in the final section, 'Forms of the Rock in a Night-Hymn':

The rock is the gray particular of man's life,  
The stone from which he rises, up—and—ho,  
The step to the bleaker depths of his descents . . .

And later:

It is the rock where tranquil must adduce  
Its tranquil self, the main of things, the mind,

The starting point of the human and the end,  
That in which space itself is contained, the gate  
To the enclosure, day, the things illumined

By day, night and that which night illumines,  
Night and its midnight-minting fragrances,  
Night's hymn of the rock, as in a vivid sleep.

'The Rock' is not that ultimate poem, a direct evocation of the Supreme Fiction and the life of that impossible possible man. No poem could be. But in 'The Rock' Stevens comes as close to that poem as he can and so would convince us that it exists and is an ultimate source of revelation. What gives the poem a centrality and wholeness lacking in some other late attempts to achieve the same end is, I think, its deeply autobiographical nature. This is, in effect, one man going to the brink of the ultimate poem, and taking us with him. Each approach to the brink must be an individual's approach, or it is nothing—a fact which Stevens' philosophical ambitions too often let him forget. Yet each approach, by virtue of its individuality, will be iconic, as the poem is iconic, for all other approaches. (One recalls Whitman's 'The Sleepers' and Emerson's 'Bacchus', which achieve their ends too, because they are so closely tied to the life of the ego whose adventure toward the ultimate poem they represent.) What 'The Rock' comes to is something like this: that since the self cannot be creative unless it has a reality upon, in, and through which to be creative, self and reality must at some ultimate point (in time, or space, or reason, or all three?) be integral, each partaking of the other. The source has been reached, or at least pointed to. And now the self, strengthened in its own realisation of its radical integrity with the reality which it must daily confront, is free to be itself, because it accepts the fact that it can be nothing else. Stevens' final poems are terribly difficult. Moreover, they are terribly personal; indeed it is this personal quality which is, in the end, their means to their universality—or is intended to be.

Two final glosses—one from a poem collected in *The Auroras of Autumn* and one from an essay on poetics collected in *The Necessary Angel*—are of great help.

That's it. The lover writes, the believer hears,  
 The poet mumbles and the painter sees,  
 Each one, his fated eccentricity,  
 As a part, but part, but tenacious particle,  
 Of the skeleton of the ether, the total  
 Of letters, prophecies, perceptions, clods  
 Of color, the giant of nothingness, each one  
 And the giant ever changing, living in change.

(*'A Primitive like an Orb'*)

From the point of view of individuated human creativity, the ultimate poem, the Supreme Fiction—being a kind of least common denominator—could only be the work of 'the giant of nothingness,' that potential in himself as man which the poet, the painter, and the rest must realise. (Earlier in '*A Primitive like an Orb*', Stevens writes: 'We do not prove the existence of the poem. / It is something seen and known in lesser poems.') This giant is 'abstract' in the more usual sense of the term, since he is what is left when all individuality is denied him and assigned to the men who meditate him and his possibility. Yet 'nothingness' is an unhappy term; and from the point of view of the giant, if we can adopt it by postulating for him a being in which his possibility is grounded, his existence surely is not 'abstract.' Thus '*The Rock*', published three years after '*A Primitive like an Orb*', manifests Stevens' effort to find a happier, more adequate term than 'nothingness.' He would adopt, by postulation, the point of view of the giant, so to evoke in a fuller and more direct fashion a sense, (as it is put in '*The Rock*') of 'The starting point of the human and the end'.

The second gloss is from '*The Relation between Poetry and Painting*' (1951):

Simone Weil . . . has a chapter on what she calls *decreation*. She says that *decreation* is making pass from the created to the uncreated,

but that destruction is making pass from the created to nothingness. Modern reality is a reality of decreation, in which our revelations are not the revelations of belief, but the precious portents of our own powers. The greatest truth we could hope to discover, in whatever field we discovered it, is that man's truth is the final truth of everything.

Poems, we must recall, are creations. The sum total of all poems—indeed, as Stevens was to declare in *The Auroras of Autumn* and 'The Rock', of all creative acts—is decreation and makes pass to the reality on which such creative acts are operative. Thus the poet as decreator apprehends reality as it has been before (if 'before' can be used in a dialectical and not a temporal sense) it could be overcome and transformed by the poet as creator. Decreation, then, is not so much a means to theorising about reality as to knowing it. The end of the decreative process is that abstraction of the adventitious, the contingent, and the particularly transformative and possessive from the reality on which the transformation has been worked, and over which possession has been gained. We are given a conception (or vision?) of the poet at the very moment he satisfies himself that he possesses and can transform reality. Such knowledge has as its necessary condition knowledge of something else: that reality also possesses him and thus furnishes the means to work his transformation. His self, his nature as poet, as any man of imagination is also rooted in reality.

The paradox and solipsism are wilful, as Stevens' later poetry clearly, if hesitantly, manifests. Thus: Poetry, in being poetry, entails a poetry beyond poetry. Such poetry, the poetry of the ultimate poem, is reached by decreation. Being reached, it gives us that knowledge which we must have if we are to postulate that rock beyond reality in which we have our ultimate being, even as it has its ultimate being in us. Subject and object

are one—never actually, but always possibly (and therefore ultimately) one. Hence that 'impossible possible philosophers' man' at the center of things. Here is, in Emersonian terms, the aboriginal source of our being. Here Stevens' quest is one with that of the line of American poets which he culminates. But where Emerson was driven in the end to postulate a nature beyond nature, a supernatural, Stevens would postulate a reality within reality, an intranatural.

And the greater paradox is this: that Stevens' quest for an ultimate humanism (for that surely is what it is) entails, whatever he may have wished, a curious dehumanisation. It urges (or forces) him in the end to purify his poems to the degree that they are hardly the poems of a man who lives, loves, hates, creates, dies . . . Rather, they are the poems of a man who does nothing but make poems; who 'abstracts' living, loving, hating, creating, dying from his poems, in the hope that what will be left will be not so much poetry but the possibility of poetry. What saves the poems for humanity is the fact that such dehumanisation develops in the process of searching for the ground of the very thing which they must forego if the search is to be carried on—their humanity. Thus the poems are incomplete—not finished but finishing, not perfected but perfecting.

At this point we may well compare the situation of the lady in 'Sunday Morning' with that of the Penelope of 'The World as Meditation'—the first a *Harmonium* poem, the second from the period of 'The Rock'. The lady, it will be recalled, comes finally to compose her life out of her sense that she lives

. . . in an old chaos of the sun,  
Or old dependency of day and night,  
Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,  
Of that wide water, inescapable.

But for Stevens' Penelope, such dependency is no longer an issue. The act of composition, of meditation, is everything. Penelope longs for Ulysses and thinks that he 'approaches from the east'. Then:

But was it Ulysses? Or was it only the warmth of the sun  
 On her pillow? The thought kept beating in her like her heart.  
 The two kept beating together. It was only day.

It was Ulysses and it was not. Yet they had met,  
 Friend and dear friend and a planet's encouragement.  
 The barbarous strength within her would never fail.

It is as though, for Stevens, the claims of imagination and reality had been adjudicated, and now the act of adjudication itself were being celebrated. Significantly, even the slight dramatic frame of this poem is unusual in the later Stevens: as though even the fact of a concrete and particular Penelope and her longings were adventitious for him who would seek the ultimate poem.

Thus the dehumanisation which I have noted is perhaps a result of the poet's drive to do so much, too much:

Professor Eucalyptus said, 'The search  
 For reality is as momentous as  
 The search for god.' It is the philosopher's search

For an interior made exterior  
 And the poet's search for the same exterior made  
 Interior: breathless things broodingly abreath

With the inhalations of original cold  
 And of original earliness. Yet the sense  
 Of cold and earliness is a daily sense,

Not the predicate of bright origin.  
 Creation is not renewed by images  
 Of lone wanderers. To re-create, to use

The cold and earliness and bright origin  
 Is to search. Likewise to say of the evening star,  
 The most ancient light in the most ancient sky,

That it is wholly an inner light, that it shines  
 From the sleepy bosom of the real, re-creates,  
 Searches a possible for its possibleness.

('An Ordinary Evening in New Haven', XXII)

As Stevens carries on this search for reality, he necessarily conceives of himself as at once philosopher and poet. Since he must be both, and at once, he can be neither. He is, perhaps, a sage.

Stevens, we must recall, wanted to 'formulate a theory of poetry [as] a significant humanity'. He tended to make poetry the *sole* humanity. He was, above all, that poet whom Tocqueville imagined for the United States:

The Poet will not attempt to people the universe with supernatural beings in whom his readers and his own fancy have ceased to believe; nor will he present virtues and vices in the mask of frigid personification, which are better received under their own features. All these resources fail him; but Man remains, and the poet needs no more.

These resources never failed Stevens. And he scorned those who in the name of history, tradition, myth, or God, would try them again. Stevens boldly proclaimed that he needed no more than Man. He was that boldest kind of humanist, an atheist. Still, though he needed no more, he yet had to discover what he had —which meant, what he was. In the end, the poetry of Man was to reveal the reality of Man and thus furnish the Rock for

future ages. As Stevens had written early in his career in a poem collected in 1942, in *Parts of a World*:

After the final no there comes a yes  
And on that yes the future world depends.

(‘The Well Dressed Man with a Beard’)

And again, somewhat later:

... The mortal no  
Has its emptiness and tragic expirations.  
The tragedy, however, may have begun,  
Again, in the imagination’s new beginning,  
In the yes of the realist spoken because he must  
Say yes, spoken because under every no  
Lay a passion for yes that had never been broken.

(‘Esthétique du Mal’, VIII)

The tragedy is that to say yes, Stevens had in the end perhaps to say no to so much—to jettison the creative for the decreative, the actual for the possible, men for Man, the world for the Rock. Yet he did so to save himself and those who would read and listen to him: to save himself and them for the creative, the actual, the men, and the world to which, once they know themselves as and when they were, they might triumphantly return.

Stevens’ rock of reality thus was that on which all social, political, and even purely personal life had to be built. He insisted on this fact again and again in prose notes and often enough in poems. For example, this poem collected in *Parts of a World*:

I heard two workers say, ‘This chaos  
Will soon be ended.’

This chaos will not be ended,  
The red and the blue house blended,  
  
Not ended, never and never ended,  
The weak man mended,  
  
The man that is poor at night  
Attended  
  
Like the man that is rich and right,  
The great men will not be blended . . .

I am the poorest of all.  
I know that I cannot be mended,  
  
Out of the clouds, pomp of the air,  
By which at least I am befriended.

('Idiom of the Hero')

Stevens' faith was that the ultimate poem contained within itself the ground of political belief because it contained within itself the ground of belief in man. The ultimate poem, would be chaotic too, and reality and imagination would be aspects of the chaos. Man's burden—in politics as in others of his ways—is that he must learn to live proximately in the light of what he can know ultimately. Stevens could not rest with the proximate, although he knew that, except in acts of the imagination, man could not go beyond it. It would seem to be the particular fate of the American poet to be caught between his overwhelming sense of the proximate and his overwhelming longing for the ultimate—in his case, between a sense of men and a sense of Man. Stevens, foregoing politics, the socio-economic, even the ordinary run of experience, in the end intended no less than to show how man, by the exercise of his strictly human imagination, could resolve the proximate into the ultimate, so to learn to become more fully what he had to be.

Thus, in 1954, he meditated the creative act of a man *without* a blue guitar—this in a poem from which even the noble rider (of his most famous essay and of many poems) was gone. All that was left were these repetitions of which the poet-hero was master. Man, because he knew how he had transformed the world, might now be able to abstract himself from the transformation:

Spring's bright paradise has come to this.  
Now the thousand-leaved green falls to the ground.  
Farewell, my days.

The thousand-leaved red  
Comes to this thunder of light  
As its autumnal terminal—

A Spanish storm,  
A wide, still Aragonese,  
In which the horse walks home without a rider,

Head down. The reflections and repetitions,  
The blows and buffets of fresh senses  
Of the rider that was,

Are a final construction,  
Like glass and sun, of male reality  
And of that other and her desire.

(‘Farewell without a Guitar’)

Meantime, for this ultimate poet there was the price to be paid for ultimateness:

Among the old men that you know,  
There is one, unnamed, that broods  
On all the rest, in heavy thought.

They are nothing, except in the universe  
 Of that single mind. He regards them  
 Outwardly and knows them inwardly,

The sole emperor of what they are,  
 Distant, yet close enough to wake  
 The chords above your bed to-night.

This, 'A Child Asleep in Its Own Life', is Stevens' last published poem.

Its title recalls the end of another poem in the decreative manner, 'The Owl on the Sarcophagus', whose subject is 'the mythology of modern death' in which alone man can realise 'the ultimate intellect'. The effect of 'The Owl in the Sarcophagus' (collected in *The Auroras of Autumn*) is of a gradual peeling off of the layers of experience which in the earlier poems had been made out to hem man in and so define him as man:

There came a day, there was a day—one day  
 A man walked living among the forms of thought  
 To see their lustre truly as it is

And in harmonious prodigy to be,  
 A while, conceiving his passage as into a time  
 That of itself stood still, perennial,

Less time than place, less place than thought of place . . .

At the end, Stevens writes of this man:

It is a child that sings itself to sleep,  
 The mind, among the creatures that it makes,  
 The people, those by which it lives and dies.

Thus Stevens' last poem, when we put it into its place in his

work, is one which treats of him who, in his ultimate meditations, is as a child waiting to be born and waiting to die. He is one who wills himself to be unnamed. He wills his own decreation, so that, beginning at the beginning, with the un-created, he can come to know and teach what naming is. Only in a dream, dare he confront his creative power as it becomes decreative. The ultimate American poet, searching for the ultimate American poem, has again willed that he become Adam. But Adam is by now quite old and quite weary. And his burden, the burden of the world which he makes in the naming, is quite great—too great. Wanting to be Adam, the American poet (who is as poet nothing more or less than the American *in extremis*) has finally discovered, is not the same as wanting to be a poet, or a man, any man of imagination. It is wanting to be a god—a god in a world without gods, to be sure, but a god nonetheless. The god-given title (and the substance) of the poem which Stevens carefully placed at the end of his *Collected Poems* is 'Not Ideas about the Thing but the Thing Itself'.

Demanding that poetry transvalue itself by exhausting itself (which was its mode of being itself); that it become an instrument which, in all its decreative power, could blazon forth the pure power of creativity—Stevens perhaps demanded too much of it. But no more than he demanded of himself as man of imagination. And this fact goes a long way toward making all the difference. It is a fact which, as we consider Stevens as the poet of the unpredictable balance, we should take into account.

# THE IOWA POETRY WORKSHOP

Paul Engle

**P**OETS have always come together in groups to read their poems, listen impatiently to the poems of others, argue the art of verse as it has been and should be. They have received criticism both useful and dreadful, and have gone away with a little more reassurance about their craft.

The Workshop at the University of Iowa must not be thought of as a closely organised course in 'technique,' with requirements of so many lines a month and practise in all known forms. It is a loose assembling of poets once a week to read and discuss poems by members of the group, quite as Leigh Hunt and John Keats would meet for an evening of talk about poetry. The poet is free to do as much or as little as he pleases, with revision of a poem to the point of its perfection the one goal in mind.

There are those who argue that it is wrong to have such arrangements for poetry in a university. I ask them: why has it been right for centuries to give criticism to painters and composers, in universities and in studios, if not to poets? The imaginative act, literary or musical or artistic, is at home in the curiously free American university. If it is proper to study a poem, is it not equally proper to write one?

In the United States, with its thousands of miles from coast to coast, it is especially helpful to have a midway point where poets can form a community, share criticism, and push on with

their art. It helps to break down the alienation of the artist from his society.

At the University of Iowa, the Workshop brings together poets from the forty-eight states, from the Philippines, Ireland, Canada, Australia, Japan, Formosa, England, emphasising the truth (and from the once 'isolationist' Midwest) that there is a single world of art and its location is the human mind anywhere.

The good poem is all we seek. I think we find it.

*DONALD JUSTICE*

LOVE'S MAP

Your face more than other's faces  
Maps the half-remembered places  
I have come to while I slept  
—Continents a dream had kept  
Secret from all waking folk  
Till to your face I awoke,  
And remembered then the shore  
And the dark interior.

*RAEBURN MILLER*

THREE PROSE POEMS

I

The sick mind manifested in fish scales and loud issues draws skin over its outward slashes and rots toward the center to make Iowa in the North. I wish I could go home where madness is what everyone is willing to fortify with active nonchalance and smells so pleasant in the open like a brown cake still warm from the oven. The sun shines.

## II

She came from behind the chimney saying what does it all mean with her arms flung out and an ungraceful walk. It is perhaps a good thing that people get hurt and go away, but I for one desire, more than I care to say, just once to be there when everything visible slips a little to the left and the mind of an onlooker must henceforward wince at the idea of sequence and get drunk and imitate the way she threw out her thin arms and cry and go away.

## III

I like to talk of killing myself because when it turns warm and the snow melts I am not at all disturbed. I once walked on a frozen river but had a hard time getting back up the bank and was so happy, so moved.

*MARTHA GRIMES*

## REFLECTIONS ON A THIRD-GRADE READER

First Child: Say, you know that story we read for today?

Second Child: I didn't read it.

First Child: Oh. Well, look—

It's *lots* different than the one yesterday.

Second Child: I didn't read it. Stupid book.

All about birds.

First Child: Well, anyway.

Some of these birds do *not* go South!

The chickadee doesn't, and even the jay.

And there isn't a thing for a hungry mouth.

Second Child: Yeah?

First Child: Well, they all flew around through the dark  
Of the freezing trees, and the nuthatcher tried

Grubbing around for this bug in the bark  
 Of a freezing tree. They mostly died.

Second Child: Death. Yeah.

First Child: What? Well, here were these broods  
 Of birds; so John, he comes in from town  
 With a bunch of wheat, to the Great Big Woods . . .

Second Child: Yeah. Did he die?

First Child: No. He threw it down.

Second Child: Did it freeze and die?

First Child: Right before the mouth  
 Of the chickadee, and . . .

Second Child: . . . the stupid jay.

First Child: Some of those birds just didn't go South.  
 (John was sort of nice . . .)

Second Child: So why didn't they?

First Child: Oh. You know. It never says.

Second Child: Yeah. I know. It never does.

### THE RED KING

*Why, you're only a sort of thing in his  
 dream . . . If that there King was to wake . . .  
 you'd go out—bang! just like a candle!  
 —Through the Looking-glass*

*The Red King sleeps beneath his tree.  
 Alice, be good. Be still. Beware  
 Of asking for reality.*

Do not complain too loudly where  
 Your tears might wet his tassled hat.  
 You'd tiptoe off, had you been there

One bitter morning, when the world sat  
 Weeping its plight, that should have known  
 He'd hear, and O! that would be that!

He stretched and yawned and tears rained down  
In floods. The kingdoms of the proud  
Went out Poof! like a candle blown.

Alice, where children cry aloud,  
I stare through darkening glass and see  
A pale sun running from a cloud.

A doubtful sky stares back at me.  
*The Red King sleeps beneath his tree.*

### THE HAUNTED HOUSE

Spiritless stair: how much it wanted  
One moving, luminous wraith.  
In an attic hardly ever haunted  
We wasted half our youth

Dragging old chains up there; and crept  
Simply for atmosphere.  
We'd scare ourselves to death, except  
Games end. We disappear.

I counted ten. Young friend, will you  
Never come out? Our game  
Is done, our reign of terror through.  
Pretending's not the same

Alone. How you'd have died to hear  
Steps halting, and the door  
Close slowly on the upper stair:  
I look back and make sure

Until I feel how I have grown  
Beyond this place, until  
The dark below the last flight down,  
Extravagantly still.

*WILLIAM M. MURRAY*

ON THE BIRTH OF A BABY

*For Kim and Connie*

'Be not afeared. The isle is full of noises  
Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.'

We celebrate your birth in other's pain,  
Your weight in wrinkled pink, that is your own.  
The floor is worn, ah me, and walked again.  
Within dark rooms the sleepless pace and moan  
Soothing the child. Tense is the contract womb  
And true the hand that slaps the flesh awake,  
Or guides the heavy breast to biting gum:  
All is divided in your name's sake.

You are our specious motion past the tomb;  
And tottering steps that fall can only shake  
Your cheeks; bewilderment has salve in crying.  
Reach for the rattle; beat the hollow drum,  
And touch your ragged dolls. Noisily speak,  
We who have learned a bit by little dying.

*ROBERT MEZEY*

ACROSTIC

Freeing your folded wings from girlhood's cell  
Of sticky silk and twig, where will you go?  
Rain hovers here, over your fluttering shell.

Submerged in dew's colostrum, you will know—  
Ascend and dip on the heavy blooms as they bend;  
No nectary suckled the nymph's dark embryo.  
Damp softens the petal; dance softly where you land.  
Rest in the fragrant cup, perfectly still.  
And rising, scatter its powder upon the wind.

Juice from those buds churns in the delicate blood,  
Ephemeral, of the gaudy friends of moths;  
A butterfly has wings of beaten gold,  
Noiselessly beating sunward to its death.

When summer left, the butterflies fell down  
In the cold air, to the cold ground. I watched  
Torn wings and withered thorax, as the wind  
Hurried their dry bodies to the woods.

Long afterward, in winter, a bright ghost—  
Or could it be I had not seen it die?—  
Veered slowly downward, fluttering over the snow.  
Everything slept except that butterfly.

#### *HENRI COULETTE*

#### THE PRODIGALS

You the ruin, I the vine,  
We complete a dark design  
—We have come to such a pass!—  
Tangled in the savage grass.  
Ever error was our way,  
Timeless in the dying day.

Though we stayed with what was given,  
Where we went was close to heaven.  
What we did was closer yet,  
Out of love, without regret.  
What we did, we did afresh.  
Naked spirit! Naked flesh!

*What you honored with your years  
Left you always in arrears.  
Thus the world, and thus it is,  
Still we paid us with a kiss.  
Spite of mortgages and liens,  
Lovers love beyond their means.*

Time has unravelled at the edge.  
Let the great world be our judge:  
Breathless, quiet, and alone,  
We lie here in leaf and stone,  
We who are in this dark mesh  
Wholly spirit, sometime flesh.

### THE FIFTH SEASON

It will be summer, spring, or fall,  
Or winter even. Who would know?  
For no one answers when we call  
Who might have answered years ago.

The harvest will be in or not;  
The trees in flower or in rime.  
Indifferent to the cold, the hot,  
We will no longer care for time.

Mortal, of ivory and of horn,  
We will become as open gates  
Through which our nothing will be borne,  
By which all nothing now but waits.

It will be summer, spring, or fall,  
Or winter even. Who will care?  
We will not answer when you call,  
For nothing, nothing echoes there.

*STEPHEN BERG*  
*EPITHALAMION*

*for Robert Ockene  
& Eloise Kanfer*

Herdsman, sailor, name each star  
Shadowing my empty room,  
Where I change, where I must steer,  
Earth and azure into song :  
Girl of light, green wave of love,  
Keep your fickle body near  
Composition's ripening ear,  
Brush the wrist of one who needs  
Every other pulse to cast  
Praise of marriage, ode for these,  
Grave, exuberant, wed today.  
Dust and bone, our bodies know  
Death and failure must not play  
Grief's distracting tunes alone.  
Underneath a winter sky  
Wait for meteoric joy,  
Touch in quiet as you burn  
Mist from every covered stone.

Bells may not complete the air  
Breathed by dwellers, deaf today  
To the fair cathedral bar,  
Common once, in every ear;  
But the wind and sea will play  
Primitive, sufficient song  
For companions at the shore,  
Nightly replenished by the wind.  
Bride and bridegroom, on this day  
Rites of marriage will be sung:  
Praise the perfect burden, love,

Light of your mortality.  
Service over, turn away,  
Trace once more the vacant aisle  
Where all pride, each chastening veil,  
Dropped, expiring in that hour,  
Fell to the red ground and blew  
Out of sight, letting you know  
Nakedness your bonds commend.

Tolerance, white falling star,  
Lodge in the earth, and glow there:  
Landlord, earth, become again  
More than hostel or mere land,  
Be the grove where humankind  
Lives with nothing to destroy.  
May each gold horizon clear  
Parting from the dawn you share,  
Separation far away  
To the fringes of your bed :  
Couple, feed the nuptial fire,  
Heaven orders less and less,  
Near, together, bid each kiss  
Keep from winter the ripe leaves  
At your window, where you see  
Orion halted, and starlight  
Flatter the city where you lay.  
Son and daughter of hard air,  
Vows will bind you, day by day,  
And continual chimings blow  
To a wild pollen each embrace.  
Yellow, yellow essence be  
Budding in your future night,  
Characters of Man you see  
Freighted through descending light:  
Emptied aster, droning tree.

Now the Dippers dip and spill  
Stars to the Dark Nebulae

Blackening the Milky Way,  
And ignite that strict attire  
Of darkness, a light scarf to be  
Worn as you combine and flame,  
Naked, earthly, with a sigh.  
Shawled Rabbi, chant, bestow  
Stars of the first magnitude  
On these closing brows, become  
Smooth by their late ecstasies,  
Dreamless, at the end of care;  
Such committed bodies go  
To each other, I and Thou,  
Free, delighted, while they share  
Rest and pleasure, hour by hour,  
While the responsive galaxies  
Warm them to each tiny bone.  
For you, that warming has begun.

Wake, discover at white dawn—  
Kanfer and Ockene are one.

### III. WORK IN PROGRESS

## THE ANGEL OF THE GRAVEYARD

Jean Garrigue

I LIVE in New York City on West Twelfth Street in a faded French-pink family house belonging to my landlady, Lucy Golightly.

My room is on the top floor. It has a wide grey skylight and a fireplace decorated with elaborately carved lions' heads. The carpet is green and cat-clawed and the carpeting on the stairway is actually tattered and cat-stained as well as cat-clawed for on the second floor (where my landlady and her thirteen-year-old daughter, Marifrance, live) there were once three cats though now there is only one, named Sandy, 'who should have been a dog, he's so smart!' But the two cats were before my time. I have only lived in this house for the last year and a half.

My landlady is a delicate blonde and a grass widow who lives by means of a small alimony (something, I gather, like twenty dollars a week) given her by her ex-husband, Rudi, (who carved the lions' heads,) by the additional rent she gets from the four apartments she rents out, and by various trades she has worked up for herself which she can conduct like a lady, at home. That is to say, she handles a rare brand of cold creams and powders, gives a special form of body exercises to fat ladies, and makes, when the occasion demands, glass eyes—and this usually and almost always, for gentlemen. Thus I live in the house of the only woman *optist* in America and on times

past in an alcove in Marifrance's bedroom, have seen these button-shaped things, looking more like cold oysters than anything else, who roll slightly together when trucks rumble by, shaking as they usually do, the frail component parts of this house.

This house which is badly in need of a thorough scouring and cleaning (enough plaster fell in the kitchen last week to have killed everyone) and whose oil heater, to my irritation, functions very poorly, originally came to my landlady as a legacy from her father, but is by now, I do imagine, so ridden by mortgages and back taxes as to be almost less hers than the Bank's, that shark!

Nor do I conjecture this out of idle or malign curiosity. Lucy tells me enough herself, being eager to give her heart. And clearly I do know that the tax and the mortgage 'trouble' began as much trouble begins, with the failure of her marriage.

Yet it is also interesting that she has chosen to befriend the arthritic Dr. Piper and his wife (who live on the first floor back) and the silent Harry (first floor front). That is to say, these tenants have been here ever since the failure of a small restaurant in the basement quarters, two years ago, and pay some ridiculously low rent for rooms that could command, in our proverbial housing crisis, almost any sum. I shall not go into the whole matter of how they stole into these rooms and gained such pathetic dominance over them. It is enough to say that they live here practically rent-free and that Aretino (who has been with Lucy for the last ten years) constantly berates her for her soft heart and that Marifrance who does not wish to side with him but who wishes to prove that she is growing up, says rhetorically to her mother at least once a month: '*Are* they paying their rent?' or sometimes more optimistically varies it to: '*Will* they pay their rent?' Lucy, indefatigable in her

feeling, invariably replies: 'My little baby wishes to help me, but I don't care, I couldn't live with myself if I put them out!' I believe that she could not for I think she nurses some fixed idea that Harry would have to return to the Bowery and that the Pipers, once again flung horribly into the world, might commit suicide.

But considering the fact that she cannot afford it, she harbors these three, and that though the Bank really harries her and she has worn one winter coat for the last five years and makes most of her own clothes and all of Marifrance's, she must yet serve wine with her meals—and what meals!—Marifrance takes dancing lessons once a week, and the spirit on her floor is one of great gaiety and confident and ever fascinated hope, this perhaps perverse and surely unwise generosity may be no paradox. For Lucy, though she is always worried about money must always I think, despise that worry too.

As for myself, here I am on the third floor, a tenant who pays the full amount of rent expected for such a 'studio' (with fireplace and skylight) and a tenant who is also Lucy's friend. (I happen to know, for example, that she has tried at three different times to commit suicide.)

Likewise as a tenant I often think of this house as a kind of asylum or retreat and these its inmates (even Aretino who makes good wages) as broken pillars of society. Yet here we are and it is a pleasurable fact that the kitchen, on Lucy's floor, is absolutely a living room, so that at any time of the night or day you can always go in to make yourself a cup of tea or boil yourself some coffee and if Lucy is not there, Marifrance will be or Aretino, sulking at the defunct radio. And since Lucy drinks coffee all day long and since meals come up irregularly, something is always happening on the stove, the table always

set with somebody's clean or dirty dishes.

You can count up the articles as I have done : the lugubrious mahogany cabinet in the corner where most of the prize-loves: mugs, a cakestand, hand-painted dishes, are on grimy display; or the other mahogany piece, a long sideboard with all sorts of drawers for those odds and ends Lucy can never find the heart to throw away, on top of which lies another magnificent assortment of unorthodox miscellany: the small Esso map of the world; pictures of a rose garden in Amityville and a snapshot of Lucy and Marifrance on the sands of Coney Island; the stout-faced stove and the red-checked curtains that hide the stuffy embrasure where baking powder, flour, sugar, and pots and pans are kept in humble disorder, and if you count them up, what do you come out with? But it remains that the moment you enter the kitchen, all its objects turn warmly and swimmingly together, the snapshot of Lucy and Marifrance and the red-checked curtains as necessary to that sense of the room's well-being as the round solid table that, like the hearthstone in other societies, seems to be the heart of the room and the house.

Thus you see that I have warm feelings about this family house and indeed I will tell you more. There are occasions down there in the kitchen, held once a month or so, when a kind of bounteous good nature becomes so much the order of the hour, and often by virtue of Lucy's spirits, so flowers upon itself, that it becomes as though we, Lucy's separate tenants, hang really together, or are bound through her bounteous attention, one to another, as persons are supposed to be when they are bound by blood or love. It never ceases to surprise me, nor my own emotions either, at such times. Nor do I know what to ascribe it to except my landlady's own frivolous and possibly—though I am not sure about this—great heart. Such occasions fall on Sunday and commemorate that other family

symbol—the late breakfast—and as fresh coffee cake or hot biscuits celebrate it—so a foremost delicacy signifies this—French pancakes—rolled up like little handkerchiefs, with butter in the folds, to be liberally soaked in elderberry juice (three gallons of which Lucy's most favourite relative, Cousin Dolly, brings every fall from the country).

To these the Pipers are never invited, being considered too tragic for such fraternities, and Harry, though he always is, and is always in the kitchen too, has never as yet sat down to the table with us on the delicate pretext that he has breakfasted more sensibly hours before. For that matter, Lucy herself is for three-quarters of the meal at the stove bringing these cakes to their perfection and since only one can be brought to such a perfection at a time and since we must all have many rounds before our hunger is satisfied—which Lucy sees to with the patience of one feeding larks to lions—the meal goes on, as you can imagine, for hours, while it is always at some point along the way that it ceases to be a meal, that is ceases to be even a function, that I myself must think of it as a rite. And perhaps it lies in the delicacy of these cakes or the power of the coffee which is the blackest you ever drank, aided to that by a judicious mixture of chicory and Italian roast, or the spectacle of us all, waiting and talking and eating—Lucy, improvising between stove and us, Aretino, his head as likely as not rudely buried in the News, Marifrance, sipping her childish glass of milk, Harry in shiny serge pants and trim brown sweater, cutting up celery and carrots for 'his' Irish Stew. At least it is then that I must think: it is *enough just to sit here*. Or say that it is then that I sometimes feel as you are asked to feel when, in the movies, you are given the grand table scene—the father presiding over the gay children with Roman nobility, the mother, playfully indulgent with her youngest, cutting up

meat for him, the dog by name of Towser or Sport, inevitably a magnificent hybrid, waiting to be slipped the forbidden biteful. For are you not expected to say: 'Ah, the good life wherein we are all both natural and sane?' So I of Lucy's scene would say that it is.

I suppose that what Lucy wants to do at such times is to enlarge her 'kingdom.' Obviously her child and Sandy the cat are its steady members and of course Aretino, who has been with her for ten years, is a reliable appendage, but I think the addition of myself and the silent Harry means something more for her too. And when I use the word *kingdom* I refer to this desire she has of binding us all together, keeping us, you might say, within sanctuary, sequestered as some of us are from the wounds of the world, so that—but of course I just conjecture this—the world will seem more safe *inside* from the invasions and erosions of the *outside*. In any case what you feel down in that kitchen on those Sunday mornings is the strength of Lucy's own feeling and the strength of her own intention to please us and keep us that way by countless jokes, flights of wit, and those morsels she serves up.

Now it seems that I as a tenant—and of all these tenants with sentimental histories I am the one who remains in the most functional relation to my landlady, for I pay my rent first and last—have dealt out as a tenant best references to you. I live here, in this warm-hearted menage, whose owner, if she saw a wasp numbed by the cold, would bring it into the house that it, reviving, might live to plague her and who would always step aside for an ant to proceed on its way. And thus you may think that I, living in this house, am that which is around me or as tender as its ruling spirit. But you must know that I do not hope to acquire a character by living here, no, not even at those moments when seated at the round solid table

I feel such affection for the dour-nosed Aretino, the pretty Marifrance, Lucy, brilliant at griddle or saucepan, our Harry, with the wooden, boxed stance of an Indian, nor that as a tenant I seriously concern myself with, say, the question of just why the Pipers huddle in their long back room so quiet for days that they might be dead or dying in there.

No, as a tenant I live within limits and for example, this morning which happens to be another Sunday when Lucy has invited me down to the same pleasant prospect, I have declined, and so am here in my room though a foul rain falls outside, skidding with a disgusting trickle and gurgle down my skypane, alone, drinking my black, scorched coffee alone.

And alone I walk up and down my room which is cold this morning, still gruesomely hung with last night's cigarette smoke and smelling, too, of the chimney as it particularly does on wet days when moisture serves to rouse up those settled gases and that ancient soot held in the shaft's crooked arm. And alone, I nervously finger the lions' heads or stand before the long deal table, or go to the windows though there is nothing to see from them but the harsh backends of other family houses and one red slab of an apartment building side, while below, just the sight of Lucy's backyard whose every object I know by heart: the chair with its springs gushed out, a wizened lilac bush, an automobile tire, and hedging this in, a fence whose boards are so badly sprained that any tom cat can leap lightly through and every tom does on occasion. In the bleak, failing light, these objects stand, under the ugly distemper of rain, while I think, pressing my forehead against the window, that the rain could not fall more spitefully nor its chill sit more unwholesomely in my heart. For I am at odds with myself this day—so much so that I think should I go down to the kitchen its conviviality would eat me up nor all the talk in the world on

Papa's garden—where you pluck the red and black fruit—'oh the garlands of it!' could do anything but drive me wild.

Yet I am expected to see Miss Brussel this afternoon for that other social occasion I am heir to, those twice-a-monthly teas she holds with all the elan, if not the splurge, of Lucy at the family board. And if conviviality is expected in the kitchen, *brio* is demanded at Miss Brussel's and above all the good manners of small pleasant talk. It is she I should call, to whom I should say I cannot come. Yet, why, yet why? A letter has merely come from my father which sits before me now on my long deal table, plastered with its pink and green stamps. And there is surely nothing so wrong in the arrival of a letter, even when it comes special delivery and even when it makes a simple request. Nothing wrong, surely, unless it couples with a dream, some six notes you woke to out of the dream, and the bemused melancholy of your own soul, a melancholia that has been with you in active form and symbol for, say, the last six months. The unhappy are the superstitious. They look for the fate they know they can't avoid, everywhere!

Well, and I don't deny this, for it is perfectly true that memory has been at work of late like a very mole and that something—I hesitate to call it conscience—rather, call it unconsciousness—has begun to ache like a tooth, that there are perceptions that wake me up just as I am falling asleep and so keep me up with them half the rest of the night and if those tea-leaves I see in Miss Brussel's fine China cups do not take on the likeness of faces or form initials it is because I do not need to have certain parts of my fortune told—I know it too well.

Yet what the reason is for this, I cannot say. Sometimes I feel that 'they' are trying to find a way out of me, into the world, or into death, where they belong, and sometimes again,

as when I am talking with Lucy, some sound strikes or chimes and just as though a curtain had been parted, my sister's face is before me once again! And as I say, I don't know what is happening unless it is true that there is being sought in me a northwest passage out of that little hell and remember, it was little—I once burned in.

Of course when I first came to New York if I thought only of Constance and seemed to see her everywhere it was because she was supposed to be coming. And if I looked for Ned that was because it was at the beginning of the war when sailors, if they were still alive, might as logically be in New York before leaving for their sure death on some sea, as any place in the country, and thus, passing some cove of a local bar where old men and frumps of the neighborhood wrangled and joked, it would not occur to me that he might not be in there and so I would walk in to see, while invariably as I would be sitting in a subway car marked *Local* I would be positive—and to my anguish—that in the *Express* which hung a moment at 96th Street in suspension above my car, he was sitting and that it was his head, one in a group of fascinating strangers, which was to be carried away, irrevocably away from me, forever. And though you can say that I was 'haunted' that first year during which, obsequiously and almost unbeknownst to my pride, I sought for him in every quaking of my step at some lanky body far off in tight midnight blue or, at a high, nasal voice turned half about, thinking that if it were not he, 'he' would lead me to him, it is to be admitted that while I was haunted, I hunted too, it was I who hunted Ned and haunted that image of him clad in a sailor suit laced tightly over his hips, and it was I who hunted for Constance in stations where, it turned out, she was never to arrive. And to hunt and to haunt is a different thing from being hunted and being

haunted. And if once when I insolently mastered harsh elements of a confused time, the mastery has since, and perhaps in just these last six months, gone out of my hands, into *their* hands, whoever *they* are.

So that my father's letter which came special delivery this morning (as did that other letter two years ago) fully accounts in one way, I believe, for the unease with which I must walk the room and turn over objects on the table and pick up books and put them down as though they were really the cards that face-up would tell me whether the knave ruled or the pure heartless diamond queen, as though they symbolised, this peacock feather and that Chinese swan and my recorder those cards of fortune-telling that bear those scenes for us—symbols of instants when everything gathers up and strikes *decision! decision!* from which, thereafter, all heart-telling action must flow.

For my father's letter not only announces that he has not been well, that, in truth, his heart has gone back on him. There is mixed, amongst his philosophising, *something more*. For it would seem that in him too, the past has been excited as a star excites the water in which its cold rays swim. Thus if it was once a frozen pool on which even he might flawlessly skate, now all is different. My God, I might ask, is the great thaw general? And if so, I want to know why. He does not say why. He speaks of his heart. 'A rusty pump,' he calls it, adding: 'But I do not wish to alarm you. If you will come home, that is enough, I can face the long months of winter and spring if I know that you will come home this summer. Were it not important—it is his last question—'would I request you?'

I sit with the special delivery in my hand and I decide to start a fire in the fireplace for the room is still cold. More strong than the desire for warmth, is the desire to destroy this letter,

to see it crackle, fry, and wither up into black fluttering ash.  
Truly, the special delivery letter, in my father's hands, is a  
fateful form!

## GENIA

Michael Hamburger

THE descent to the beach was so steep that I ran down the path, only halting at times to take in the view, inspect a lizard or listen to the strange crackling sound in the broom bushes; a swarm of locusts feeding, I assumed dramatically, but it was the seed-pods bursting in the heat. Or did I run because I was in such a hurry to make my first contact with the Ionian sea? I can't tell after all these years. All I know is that I wasn't nearly old enough to reflect that salt water is much the same anywhere. The Ionian Sea! Names meant a great deal to me in those days. And I'd never been further south than Naples.

The water would have chilled my excitement if anything could have done; it was cold enough, despite the name and the molten gold pouring into it. But that was an advantage too, for I had it all to myself, the whole glittering bay and the unbroken stretch of blue beyond it. The beach, in fact, was almost deserted when I came down. There were three or four scattered groups of deck chairs, but the occupants showed no sign of being ready to bathe. I made for an island of rocks that seemed to recede as I swam out; but I touched it at last, rested for a moment and turned off towards the grottoes on one side of the bay. There I dived for corals, detached a few, tucked them under the elastic of my bathing trunks, and lost them on the way back.

Later, as I lay in the sun after a long swim, the growing

hub bub encroached on my consciousness for a moment, but I was too drowsy to take much interest. Most of the noise seemed to be coming from a party of young men, adolescents by English standards, who were showing off their brown and muscular bodies from every possible angle, playing some strenuous and boisterous game which immediately suggested the need for spectators. Their absorption in the game, their animal exuberance and the spontaneity of their poses were just a little too good to be true; they were those not of children, but of well-rehearsed actors. Sicilians, I supposed, probably local boys. I wished they would play at statues and leave it at that, cut out the shouting and the laughter. And I drowsed off again.

'Halloh!'

It was difficult to believe I was being addressed, but I sat up to make sure. An encounter with one of the goddesses, Artemis rather than Aphrodite at that time, was one of the items included in my mental Baedeker; it had about as many stars as the Ionian Sea.

The voice came from the party nearest to me, the same I had glimpsed and cursed in my post-marine coma. I now saw that it revolved around a girl in a fashionable two-piece swim suit—a *reductio ad absurdum*, too little or too much—and with just enough make-up to bring out her worst feature in relief. I put her age at eighteen or nineteen. She was blonde, plump and golden-skinned. What struck me as I looked at her now was how foreign she seemed, how preposterously out of place amongst those boys.

'Halloh,' she repeated, as I stared at her incredulously. There was no mistaking the American 'l.'

As I mumbled my 'halloh' I felt all the young men's eyes fixed on me, quizzical, expectant, amused, but mostly quizzical. I was being sized up in a professional way which I'd observed

in one highly respectable woman's first response to another, but had thought peculiar to the instinctive competitiveness of women; and there was something else in their scrutiny which I liked even less.

'You on holiday here?' she tried again.

'Yes. This is my second day.'

One of the boys shouted something in Sicilian; yelling and guffawing they all got up and ran towards the sea. I noticed that they didn't go in, but chased one another along the edge.

She had ignored them desperately. 'Maybe you can tell me why anyone comes here anyway.'

The question impressed me as so original or so naive that I got up and moved over to where she was sitting; as I did so, I moved my hand to draw her attention to the surroundings, trying at the same time to see them as they might appear to someone as ingenuous as I took her to be. On the hillside behind us, covered with giant prickly pears now in flower, a few white-washed villas glared in the sunlight; in front of us was the gold and blue of the bay, framed in the reddish-brown rocks from which I had dived for corals. Of course I knew the kind of sophistification which consists in pretending to ignore the obvious; but I couldn't associate it with this girl.

'Yeah, I guess it's pretty,' she conceded, as if she'd never given the matter a thought. 'Still, personally I prefer Paris. That's where I live.'

The five boys were still at it on the beach. They were wrestling with friendly ferocity, playing leap-frog and doing handstands. Now one of them flung himself into the shallow water, to be loudly applauded by the others; but he didn't stay in long. From time to time I caught glances in our direction; and it was curious how the American girl kept one eye on them even as she talked to me.

'Left bank or right bank?' I asked, mechanically compelled to 'place' her.

She didn't know, but told me she'd come to Sicily by mistake, and wished she were back in Paris.

'I can think of a lot of people who wouldn't mind making that mistake.'

'Well, it's like this, there's a girl I know in Paris; she thought she needed a holiday and said she'd pay for me if I'd come with her. We're sharing a room at the 'Belvista.' But now she wants to be alone, so she told me to get the hell out of it back to Paris; but she won't give me the money, and I can't tell my father to cable any 'cause he musn't know I'm here. So I guess I have to stay put.'

Stupidly, I said again that there were worse places to be stuck in, and asked her how she liked the Greek theatre.

'Sure I like it . . . Why, do you mean there's one here? Nobody ever told me. Is it far from the town?'

'Not in the least; as a matter of fact the entrance is nearly opposite your hotel.'

'Aw,' was all she said. I was beginning to feel very sympathetic towards her.

She went on to tell me her name, Genia, her age, seventeen, and a good deal about her life in Washington, New York and Paris. Her parents were Servian immigrants, and her first name was short for Evgenia. She was returning to her present dilemma, which seemed to worry her, when three of the Sicilians came back. They had been holding an animated conference, after which two of them left the beach.

Smiling—for my benefit, and with unclouded friendliness—they squatted down.

'You speak Italian, signore?' one of them asked. Unlike the rest he was fair-haired, and rather more slenderly built. I

guessed he was even younger than Genia.

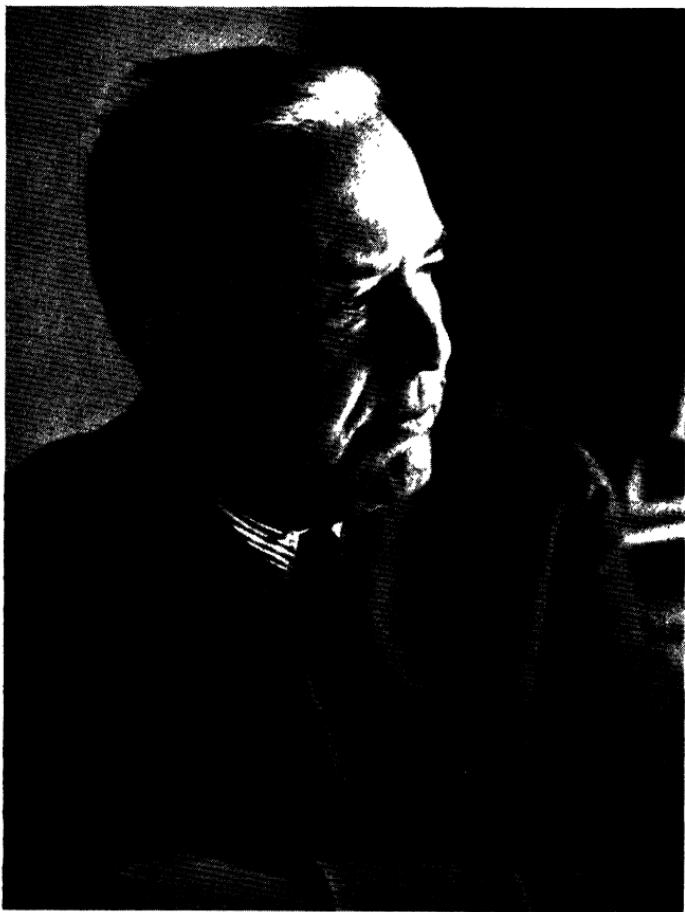
'*Poco*,' I replied glad of this excuse for silence.

'You like *Americana*, eh? *Bella ragazza*, no?'

Genia seemed quite unperturbed. But surely she'd understood those simple words? The boy seemed to expect an answer less noncommittal than my embarrassed laugh. Now that I came to think of it, I didn't 'like' Genia in the way he meant. There was something flabby and babyish about her face, as there was about her body. Her garish lipstick brought out the shortness, fullness and looseness of her lips; and her pale-blue eyes were so large and limpid that they seemed insipid.

As I didn't feel like talking to her in the presence of those boys, I waved good-bye to her and went back to my place. What puzzled me was Genia's attitude to her entourage. There was no question of a conversation between them. While the boys talked to her in their pidgin English, she stared at them in silence with what one might have taken to be disdain; but her eyes were wide with wondering attention, and it occurred to me that Genia, in any case, was incapable of expressing disdain. Then suddenly I saw that there was more to it than that: her raptness was that of suspense, of indecision. I wasn't at all surprised by the abrupt movement with which she positively tore herself away, picked up her belongings and fled.

Neither, it seemed, were the boys. After another short conference, not quite as amicable as the earlier one, I thought, two of them sauntered off towards the cubicle where Genia was dressing, waited there for a moment, but when the attendant walked up to them, left the beach. The third—the same who had spoken to me before—stayed where he was, managing to divide his attention between Genia's cubicle and me. When Genia came out and made for the road, he bowed to her



*Sylvia Salmi*

Wallace Stevens

TWO  
SWEDISH  
WRITERS

Sara Lidman



*km*

Harry Martinson

*Milm*





Vladimir Nabokov



Hermann Broch  
in Vienna, 1935

*Genner*

*Yal*



Death Mask  
taken by  
Peter Lipman-Wulf

sardonically and joined me.

The heat was now intense; it was past noon. Besides the two of us only a few fishermen remained at the far end of the beach, talking, resting against their boats or mending their nets. I fetched the nearest deck chair and began to eat my lunch of bread, cheese and olives in its shade.

For a time the boy watched me eat. I should have offered him some of my lunch, but imagined he would soon be sitting down to a better one, and hoped he would.

Giorgio was his name, he informed me as soon as I couldn't help acknowledging his company; and at once went on to declare that he thought the girl was mad. At least, he corrected himself, she didn't know her own mind and wasn't fit to travel by herself; and these foreigners must be mad to let their daughters do so. She wasn't the first of her sort, by any means; but she was the worst case he'd ever come across.

I quite agreed with him; and I was rather astonished to find him so sensible. But suddenly he changed his tune:

'Are you interested in the Americana?' he asked point-blank. I was handicapped by my small Italian vocabulary; so I said 'no.'

'Well, in that case you won't mind telling me something about her, eh? Where she's staying. How long for. Would you say she has a lot of money?'

'I don't know anything about her.'

'You talked to her long enough.' Then, with a laugh, he suggested that I shouldn't object to going to bed with her, as I seemed to be travelling alone.

As I wouldn't reply, he shrugged his shoulders, probably as much as to say that I was just another of those mad foreigners.

'Why not?' he insisted. 'It's easy for you, because you speak the same language; and I don't suppose you're short of money

either.'

I suppose it was now my turn to ask questions; but I felt that I knew enough. As there was nothing more to be said, and Giorgio seemed disinclined to go, I asked him whether he was on holiday too. Was I right in thinking he was a student, I asked disingenuously.

'Oh yes, I'm a student; of course I am . . . I'm a student of tourists.' This definition seemed to amuse him, for he repeated it before going on:

'You can't know much about Sicily, signore. We have too many holidays here. Today we do this, tomorrow we do that. A fortnight ago I returned from Venice—all the way to Venice for nothing. Next week I may try the hotels in Rome. There's no work for us here, with all those new travel restrictions and the hotels nearly empty. Look at those fishermen: even they have to take tourists to the grotto in their boats, or sell them bits of coral. They're too old to do anything else, poor devils—and too old to know better.'

At that moment an old man came up to us with a basket of sea-urchins, cut one open and showed me how to eat the roe with a spoon. When I bought a dozen, Giorgio shouted at the old man in dialect and made an obscene gesture. The old man's reply, equally unintelligible to me, sounded as if he were scolding Giorgio, who kicked him lightly with his bare foot and walked off.

I fell asleep. When I awoke my head was no longer shaded by deck chair, and the beach had filled up again. Almost involuntarily, I glanced to my left. Genia and her retinue were back in the same place.

Thanks to my conversation with Giorgio, the situation was now clear to me, at least from the Sicilians' point of view. As for Genia, I couldn't help thinking of the courtship of cats, the

tense immobility of the female seemingly hypnotised by the surrounding males. I'd sometimes wondered whether this lengthy ritual might be due to the female's difficulty in choosing a mate. Yet Genia was anything but cat-like; and though she now went so far as to nod or shake her head in reply to Giorgio, who was evidently gaining on his friends, the current still did not seem to be passing altogether freely. Was it because of the other two? They were unmistakably bored. Following their glances, I noticed that a similar group of adolescents had formed around a bald, elderly man who was sitting on a deck chair close to the water's edge, though he was fully, even elaborately dressed.

For a moment I wanted to interfere, to tell Genia not to make a fool of herself. I tried to catch her eye, but got nothing more than a wink from Giorgio. After all, I told myself, it's none of my business; and even if I made it mine, anything I did or said would be lost on her. The complete dreariness and futility of it all! How could I convince her of that, without boring her as profoundly as the very thought of it bored me? It was this sense of an impenetrable unreality that made me decide to have another swim and then walk back to town.

While I was in the water a large yacht entered the bay, the first I'd seen in these parts. By the time I was drying myself on the beach, the yacht had been anchored some hundred yards from the shore. The owner, who looked like a retired British officer, emerged from the cabin, spoke a few words and disappeared again. His words must have been instructions to a tall sailor, bare to the waist, who now began to busy himself on deck.

There was a loud splash. Genia had leapt to her feet, run into the water and now seemed to be swimming out towards the yacht. The beach, which had been buzzing with somnolent voices, was roused to silence. I could hear the crickets chirp in

the fields and gardens above. I felt that everyone, without exception, was watching Genia as she made for the yacht, called out to the sailor and, lowering her voice, spoke to him earnestly for half a minute or so. Then she turned back, and the tension snapped. 'Putana!' I heard Giorgio exclaim, and other voices broke into noisy comment. Unlike Giorgio, his two companions showed no anger; one of them roared with laughter at something he had shouted at Giorgio, the other shrugged his shoulders. Then they left the beach.

In the few minutes it took me to dress the sailor had come ashore in a dinghy. 'She was waiting for him right in the middle of the beach,' Giorgio told me as we walked back to town, 'just as though they had an appointment; and I bet she's never set eyes on him before, that bastard of a Maltese. But there's one thing to be said for those sailors: they never stay very long.' He went on to grumble again about the unpredictable ways of foreigners, but suddenly broke off his tirade and turned to me with a smile, all candour and sweetness.

'You said you don't like the Americana, signore. If you meant that you don't like the women, perhaps . . .', and he struck a pose that made it only too clear what new possibility had dispelled his gloom. There was something about the climate and the place that inhibited stock responses; and only a stock response more drastic than any I was capable of at that moment would have rid me once and for all of Giorgio's attentions. Very patiently, very calmly I explained that he had misunderstood me. Giorgio at once offered to introduce me to a beautiful foreigner, a Swedish lady whom, he said, he knew very well; rolling in money, too, he added, and the owner of a fine villa. When I declined, he proposed that if I cared to hire a car he would be delighted to take me to the nearest brothel, in a village some miles along the coast. I could only assure him

that I was perfectly happy, and needed no services of any kind.

'That's just what's wrong with all these new tourists,' Giorgio sulked; 'a lot of paupers, with no more juice in them than a squeezed lemon.'

He still did not leave me, but fell into a worried silence which left me free to pursue my own thoughts, still occupied with Genia and my last glimpse of her on the beach. As little conscious of her human, as of her scenic surroundings, she had walked with the tall sailor through all those faces peering from deck chairs, past the fishermen sitting beside their boats, to disappear behind the rocks. She hadn't even troubled to take her towel, her handbag or her clothes.

I'd intended to go down to the beach again the following morning, but it was scirocco weather. A short walk to the post office brought me back limp and gasping to the relative coolness of my room. I was trying hard to concentrate on a novel—even that seemed too great an exertion—when the *padrone* came up to tell me that a young lady wished to see me. Should he show her up to my room? Irritated by the mischievous twinkle in his eyes, I said: no, I should be down in a moment.

It could only be Genia. I wondered how she'd found out where I was staying. Reluctantly I put on my shirt—still moist after my recent walk—wiped my face and went down into the hall of the dingy *pensione* where I was the only guest.

'I've gotter talk to you,' Genia said at once; 'Let's go up to your room.'

'Of course; but it's stifling in there,' I lied. 'What about going to the Public Gardens? They're very fine, and probably cooler than any other part of the town.'

She said she was tired, and looked it, but I insisted on going out.

The whole town had been curiously transformed by this imperceptible, enervating wind. Even the sea looked dead, a sulphurous yellow lake, and above it the curling mist like some poisonous exhalation. The luxuriant flowers in the Public Gardens—the arum lilies, scarlet bignonia, purple bougainvillea and the white trumpets of the datura tree, with their cloying, narcotic scent—had become waxen and lifeless. The foliage hung like wet rags; and the palm trees looked as though they had been planted as a background for some trite movie. The soil itself seemed to be sweating.

Genia's energy was unimpaired. We were still in the main street when she began a breathless confession, but she was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Giorgio, who had evidently been dogging her all the morning. This time I was prepared for him, and returned his cynical greeting with a look that had some effect. After walking with us in silence for a few moments, he made off into a wine shop.

'I think you'll be seeing more of our friend Giorgio,' I remember warning Genia. She didn't react.

We found a bench on the steep slope overlooking the sea, in a part of the gardens densely covered with trees, shrubs and long grass.

For the second time Genia apologised for her appearance; she hadn't slept all night, and was covered with bruises, scratches and mosquito bites. She'd had the greatest difficulty in retrieving her clothes early this morning, because her handbag and towel had been stolen, and she'd had to appease the attendant with the promise to pay him later, leaving her swim suit as a pledge. But there was nothing apologetic about her manner when she said:

'I spent the whole night on the rocks with that Maltese sailor; at least, we moved down to the beach when it got too

uncomfortable. You'd never believe how cold it gets at night.' She slid off the bench on to the grass, made herself comfortable and waited for me to join her. I stayed where I was.

'Have you had any breakfast, Genia?'

'They gave me a cup of coffee on credit, in the café near the "Belvista"; the waiter told me where you're staying. He said you were the only young Englishman in this goddam place. I didn't go back to the hotel. I don't care to see Mary—that's my friend I told you about—and she doesn't care to see me either. I just had to talk to someone, so I came along to see you.'

'Did you leave your . . . boy friend down at the beach, then?'

'You mean the sailor? He only had shore leave for the night; they're going on to Palermo or some place. They left at six in the morning.'

'I see.' I couldn't think what to say. 'Are you sorry he's left?'

'I guess he was all right as long as he kept his mouth shut.'

This remark reduced me to silence for a minute or two. It had no place in my mental Baedeker, nor did it fit in with my idea of Genia. She was not exactly a Lady Chatterley. I supposed she had picked up the remark from someone in her Paris set. Then Genia smiled at me :

'Maybe you think I'm crazy, bursting in you like this.'

'No, I was only thinking that you don't seem to have spent a very pleasant night. And I can't really see the point of it all . . .'

'What else could I do? I couldn't go back to the hotel, 'cause Mary picked up some Italian boy and told me not to come back again. She won't speak to me now. It was all so unexpected, 'cause Mary was never interested in boys before: that's why she wanted me to come with her to Italy. Nearly all our friends in Paris are like that. When she thought I hadn't understood, she added some word that sounded like "faggots", and went on: 'You see, they think it isn't smart to be ordinary.'

'Yes, I know what you mean. Did you think so too?'

'Yeah, I guess I did; but when Mary walked out on me, I changed my mind. And I'm not sorry I did. But what am I going to do now? I've got to get back to Paris somehow, and I haven't a cent . . . Say, would you let me stay with you for a while, till I get some money from Paris? Then I could pay you back.'

There was no lack of empty rooms at my *pensione*, and they were cheap; if Genia didn't mind roughing it in other ways, such as food and drink, I might just be able to . . . But before I'd finished working this out, she continued:

'I mean I could share your room, and maybe it wouldn't cost you any more . . .'

'Look, Genia, don't you think it would be best if you went back at once? Perhaps I could have a talk with Mary. After all, she promised to look after you on this trip. But before we do anything else, you ought to eat some breakfast,' and I pulled out the thousand odd lire I had on me.

Genia took the money. She didn't seem in the least offended, yet for some reason I felt ashamed of myself, as if I were fobbing her off with something she hadn't asked for, out of a meanness much more despicable than these crumpled and dirty notes. Yet I was doing the sensible thing, and ought to have been justified by the knowledge that Genia had no choice but to follow last night's experiment with another. If I almost hated Genia at that moment, it was because she made me feel old, forced me to act like a Dutch uncle and a prig.

'You can go and see Mary if you like,' she said, 'but you'll be knocking your head against a brick wall. I guess she'll tell you to mind your own business.'

'I dare say she will.' My weariness provoked Genia, and released all the accumulated tension which she'd managed to

control until now.

'You don't know Mary,' she blurted out 'how cruel she is, how selfish. She wouldn't care a damn if I killed myself. I never knew it myself till two days ago—when she picked up that lousy Italian. From that moment she hated my guts. She won't listen to anything I say. All she ever tells me is: get the hell out of here back to Paris. And she won't even give me the money. The rest of the time she acts as though I wasn't there. I only wish I'd taken that sailor back to the hotel—that would have shown her, and we would have had a roof over our heads at least. Instead I had to freeze all night on the beach.' She wiped her forehead with the back of her hand. 'And after all that he said I was no good.'

It was too much for me. I was going to ask her to stay with me, whatever that might imply, when there was a rustling in the shrubs, and Giorgio stepped out.

'Very sorry to disturb the signore and his lady,' he said in Italian, but would you mind giving me a light?'

He produced a packet of Camels and turned to Genia:

'You like one, Miss? Or you prefer English cigarette, maybe from Malta?'

Before I had taken in the situation, Genia had leapt at Giorgio and slapped his face. I was afraid Giorgio might hit her, and quickly drew her aside; but Giorgio, apparently quite unruffled, merely spat on the ground, drawled out a contemptuous 'Putana!' and walked off down the path.

'What did he call me, that goddam son of a bitch?' Genia asked, still trembling.

'Oh, nothing. And there wasn't any need to do that. I could have dealt with our friend Giorgio. Now it isn't safe for you to stay here another day. Surely you know that the Sicilians have a peculiar code of honour.'

As a matter of fact it wasn't at all clear to me how this code applied to a slap administered by a woman; quite possibly it was I who was now due for a vendetta. Or perhaps the code didn't apply to foreigners at all. It was far too hot to worry about that.

'Aw, I loathe the sight of those gigolos—that's all they are. They were after my money—him and all his glamorous friends. At least that sailor didn't ask for anything but what he got.'

'Come on, Genia. You'd better come and have that breakfast—or an early lunch. You must be famished. After that we'll go and pick up your things. Perhaps Mary will at least help me to raise your fare, if I explain why you've got to get out of this place at once.'

Genia wasn't even listening. She was staring at the sea, from which the mist was gradually lifting. It was still uncannily smooth but the yellow had turned to a pale, intermediary green, with a streak of blue in the distance.

'You know,' she said, as I waited for her to get up, 'I still haven't seen that Greek theatre. Maybe there's something kinder special about this place, something I've missed. I thought that when I saw the fishing-boats go out last night—the time we came down from the rocks—and I felt kinder sad with all those lights moving out to sea.'

Genia, if I forgot to mention it, was an art student.

'We can always stop at the Greek theatre on the way,' I said.

But we didn't, because Genia was too tired, and didn't want to stop.

The 'Belvista' was a medium-sized and moderately luxurious hotel set in a large garden, or rather a series of terrace gardens carved out of the hillside.

Genia wasn't going to bother with the formality of knocking

on the door of what had been her own room; but I did so, and made her wait.

Mary was alone. She had been washing her face, and was still drying it as she half-opened the door.

'Oh, it's you,' she said, and turned her back on us.

She was a dark, slim girl of about twenty—the very opposite of Genia not only physically, but in that totality of feature and bearing from which we receive our first impression of personality. Everything about her seemed taut, controlled, purposeful and poised. Feline was the obvious word suggested by her high cheekbones and rather narrow eyes, and I could see at once that she was quite capable of the predatory fierceness, the ruthless indifference of a cat.

The room was well furnished in a modern style, but it looked far from elegant with its present clutter of suit-cases, clothes and waste paper. There were cigarettes ends all over the furniture and the floor. The double bed had not been made.

Genia had begun to introduce me as soon as we entered; but Mary spun round and cut her short:

'Where you been?'

'I've come to pick up my things. I'm getting out of this.'

'Go right ahead,' and Mary returned to the wash basin, where she began to comb her hair. Sullen, laconic, but not petulant, Mary's words confirmed my sense of her self-sufficiency. She made me acutely conscious of being an intruder and busy-body.

Genia looked at me as if to say: didn't I tell you?

As I went up to Mary, I knew that it wasn't only Genia's cause I was pleading. I wanted Mary to accept my presence.

'May I have a word with you?'

Mary ignored me.

I repeated my question, but—to my shame and disgust—found myself adding 'please.' Mary didn't even turn her head.

'The point is,' I tried again, 'Genia hasn't got her fare to Paris, and it's difficult for me to raise it. Something has happened that makes it essential for Genia to leave at once . . .'

At last Mary looked at me, but with such unmitigated contempt that I felt myself blush. She still didn't deign to speak.

She finished combing her hair, glanced at Genia, who was hurriedly throwing her belongings into a suitcase, and opened the door to the verandah.

'Come out here,' she commanded.

Genia hesitated, looked at me questioningly, and obeyed. Mary followed her out and shut the door.

The two girls spent a long time outside, so long that I could hardly bear to wait. The longer they stayed, the more foolish I felt, the more tempted to sneak out and have done with the whole affair.

Then it was Mary who returned, picked up a book and curled up on her untidy bed. Her rudeness exasperated me. If I had spoken to her now, I should have crowned my defeat with an exhibition of the most feeble and ludicrous fury. So I stamped out of the room to look for Genia.

She was leaning on the parapet, her eyes on the rose garden below or on the sea beyond it. A faint breeze had risen, and the sky had almost cleared, though the heat was still oppressive.

She started when I approached her, probably because she'd forgotten I was still there.

'I'll never see that Greek theatre, I guess,' she said without looking at me. 'Mary says I'm leaving at once. Her boy friend is coming to see her at four.'

'Oh, is he? And has she given you the money?'

'Well, she's going to hire a car to take me as far as Messina.'

'How very generous of her. And then?'

'Aw,' said Genia, still without any sign of emotion, 'she says

I can hitch-hike back to Paris. She says she'll give me enough money to buy food on the way.'

'And where are you going to spend the nights? It's quite a long way to Paris, you know.'

'Aw, I'll get along somehow. Mary says now I've started being independent, I may as well go on.'

'Oh, does she? But what do *you* think about it? You must be worn out.'

'I guess she's right,' Genia replied, 'I guess I've given up caring one way or the other.'

'Well, I haven't; and I'm going to get you that money, even if it means cutting short my holiday.'

Mary appeared at the door.

'Finish your packing, Genia. I'm going to order the car.'

'No, you're not,' I said; 'not before I've been to the bank and cashed some Travellers' Cheques.' I looked at my watch. 'Come on, Genia, we'll have to hurry; you can come back for your things later.'

'The door will be locked after four,' Mary declared, and went back to her book.

'You go and get the money,' Genia said, 'while I finish packing. Otherwise she may lock me out. I'll be waiting for you here.'

It was only half-past three when I returned with the greater part of what remained of my year's travelling allowance. I wasn't at all sure that I could trust Genia to repay it as soon as she got back to Paris, or to repay it at all; but I was not going back on the one real decision I had been able to make in my dealings with Genia—and with Mary, for that matter. One reality would remain after that involvement. Even if it proved nothing more than the absurdity of my part, at least I shouldn't

be left staring at a screen.

The door was locked. I knocked repeatedly before going out to search the grounds for Genia, then came back and knocked again.

That's the end, I thought, and forbade myself to ring the bell at the reception desk. Even if she'd left a message for me, and I doubted it, I'd done enough running about in the sticky heat.

But it wasn't quite the end. I saw Genia again a few hours later—on the beach.

She was sitting in the very same place, but with Mary. There was one other difference. Giorgio and all his four friends were a few yards away, performing their acrobatics for the benefit of three girls who were talking in French.

Mary, dressed in a blouse and slacks, was reading. Genia wore her swim suit and was gazing vacuously at nothing I could identify.

Without thinking, I went up to Genia and pulled out the wad of notes I had drawn for her at the bank.

'Hulloh, Genia,' I said, 'what on earth became of you this afternoon? Here's the money, if you still . . .,' but I broke off.

Mary didn't look at me at all; that was to be expected. But neither did Genia, while I stood there holding out the bundle of notes.

Genia stared and stared out to sea. She didn't even frown, as one might at a stranger who has chosen to pester one with his attentions; and Mary didn't even indulge in the wickedness of a smile. Genia simply stared and stared till I knew that we'd never met. And still I couldn't move away.

Then Mary flicked over a page. It was my anger at this movement which released me, so that I turned away and walked to the other end of the beach.

Genia's eyes did not follow me, but remained fixed in the

direction of the sea, now golden and blue as before.

When I looked back at them for the last time, Mary was lighting a cigarette; but, though she raised it from her book, her glance didn't turn to Genia, as I thought it would. And neither of them spoke.

FOUR POEMS BY  
MARNIE POMEROY

FOR A BAD DOG

1

In tears I poked through ditches without grass,  
Where brooks had ducked their gravel bed,  
And old leaf-piles. No thorny grove I'd pass,  
But waded searching with my shins cut red.  
For him I dared not name, disgraced and dead.  
From haunting every likely hill  
On that sick mission I was not delivered  
Till I grew older and empowered, until  
I dared ask where he lay.  
They muttered how those once-exulting bones  
Beneath a cedar tree were bound in clay.  
To kneel above on weeds and scattered stones  
From the house I rushed away,  
And drove my grief into his grief that day.

2

To wrench his corpse up at the cedar's foot  
Would be wrong business for a living man.  
Yet I dug the underworld of mole and root  
In weaker acts of thought, and hugged in vain  
His body lapsed to festering rich earth  
That seeped through shrouds of burlap. Then I found  
How much that hill expresses his rebirth

Beyond a deepening of the grass, beyond  
My aching that his homely quick respond:  
All nose, ears, legs, and locomotive zest,  
While hunting he had so embraced this ground  
That either absent left the other dim—  
Such was the mettle of my ragged beast;  
His bones grow the hill upon them now. I reach him.

### IN MY SHOES

I never wish to be anyone else,  
No blend of pedestalled lives I'd choose.  
Though dropping sick and poor to sleep  
My built-in friend I'd pray to keep,  
Too frankly staunch to lose.

I love this humorous sensual self  
Who jokes me up from every pain,  
And who appreciates no less  
Than a gift of books, or fancy dress,  
Night with the sound of rain.

Yet doubtless if a wizard's work  
Changed me to some unlucky bore,  
I could inhabit comfortably  
Her instincts, outlook, voice and body  
Like rooms made mine in an hour.

For through unchronicled mean disasters  
And year-out drudgeries I'd find  
Those sudden bouquets when waysides gave  
Her pleasure, and I still would crave  
An extra day at her end.

## ADAM'S EVE AND WE

Must we beautify Old Eve?  
She was hairy, I believe,  
And shambled on her knuckles  
Through milk and honey jungles  
Humanly sweating like a dozen workmen.  
What though her pouted jaw grew bristles then?  
First Man could dote upon his home-maker  
For peacock pie and a warm cave corner,  
For clawing him on pelts, all-eager.  
After she incurred our big disaster,  
He stuck to her in having next to suffer  
Drier lands and eat raw tiger.  
Then like any bellied bitch, she bore  
Small copies of himself—what she was there for.

Since but a womb was necessary to her  
Why do we million mud-faced daughters think her  
Adam's chubby-thighed delight,  
Flushed and fresh in any time or light?  
For our own wishful sakes, because  
We hate this greedy shaggy ghost with paws  
Who grounds us in our heritage of flaws.

## EVER AFTER

He who boldly roamed in rags to beard  
Appointed ogres, won the castled princess.  
Now tall and costumed, off they smoothly ride  
Into the sunset. Think not of their bliss  
As spellbound as their perils neatly banished,  
Nor of seconds—witch nor swan nor fairy  
Nor godmother for the nicks of time, now vanished.  
To more soft jobs and miracles they fly.

But think of helpful minor characters—  
The gouty crone who told the prince which way,  
The toad who lent the sword, exhausted chargers,  
Pages, coachmen, cooks and elder sisters—  
Plain personages free to just go home  
Anticlimactically, the wedding over,  
With at best their ugly kind for love,  
Dinners fit for sharing, stoves, and laughter  
On Sundays once a week forever after  
Among doomed generations we are part of.

## DAVID WAGONER

## DIARY

At Monday dawn, I climbed into my skin  
And went to see the money. There were the shills:  
I conned them—oh the coins fell out of their mouths  
And paint peeled from the walls like dollar bills.  
Below their money-belts, I did them in.

All day Tuesday, grand in my underwear,  
I shopped for the world, bought basements and aeroplanes,  
Bargained for corners and pedestrians  
And, when I'd marketed the elms away,  
Swiped from the water, stole down to the stones.

Suddenly Wednesday offered me my shirt,  
Trousers, and shoes. I put them on to dream  
Of the one-way stairway and the skittering cloud,  
Of the dangerous, footsore crossing at the heart  
Where trees, rivers, and stones reach for the dead.

And the next day meant the encircling overcoat  
Wherein I sweltered, woolly as a ram:  
From butt to swivel, I hoofed it on the loam,  
Exacting tribute from the flock in the grass.  
My look passed through the werewolf to the lamb.

Friday shied backwards, pulling off my clothes:  
The overcoat fell open like a throat;  
Shirt-tail and shoe went spidery as a thought,  
And covetous drawers whipped knee-deep in a knot;  
My skin in a spiral tapered into gold.

And it was naked Saturday for love  
Again: the graft grew milky at a kiss.  
I lay on the week, with money, lust, and vapor,  
Megalomania, fear, the tearing-off,  
And love in a coil. On Sunday, I wrote this.

## ALAN BROWNJOHN

## FIRES

There have been nights when fire was in the lines, and  
In the mornings, nothing left but cinders,  
Showing how vain it was. At times like that  
You seem to narrow in scope, your area dwindle

To a small, solitary point—the failure  
To catch love, landscape, fable, anything.  
All that is left is saying this, and  
'Failure to write' becomes the only theme.

And this acts as a funnel for your thoughts:  
To it, the dwindling mass of sand shifts down,  
And vanishes, grain by grain—only to form,  
Beyond that narrowest place, a growing heap.

Diminishing to where remain no choices  
Other than silence, themes you lost begin  
To gather strength from fear, and come alive  
In unexpected colour, candour, power.

Rhythms compel, your words convince at least  
Your own imagination. Therefore begin:  
*Out of this fire, one small and hovering coal*  
*Falls suddenly to the hearth. Its smoke winds out*

*Across the room. Her careful vigilant hand*  
*Moves down to put it back. (Is the chance come,*  
*Courage regained, to go on, trace whose hand*  
*It was, depict a love you once left dumb?)*

## IV. EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE

### ARAGON AT THE CROSSROADS

Dominique Arban

*(Translated by Olive Classe)*

THIS young man, of an age to fight in 1917, seems to have strolled into his century with the pump-room saunter of his fathers—the gratified air of Parisians for whose benefit the Eiffel Tower had been built, their taste for idleness and insolence, a callous amiability, a courteous libertinism—all gifts he was later to bestow on some of his characters, together with money, leisure and mistresses. Aragon, such a Barresian young bourgeois . . . here I must pause: at this point it is better to let him speak for himself: 'Barrès shaped the sensibility of several generations . . . Barrès filled this rôle for middle-class youths of a certain period: what else was I?'

Aragon wrote these words in 1948: he had had time to assess the situation. He tells us in the same essay, published with others under the title of *La Lumière de Stendhal* (The Light of Stendhal) how and when Maurice Barrès became his first master. 'The year I made my first communion, when I was eleven, my French teacher at the school of Saint-Pierre, at Neuilly, chose as my first prize for essay-writing *Vingt-cinq années de vie littéraire* (Twenty-five Years of Literary Life) by Maurice Barrès . . . This book burst upon me like a flash of sunlight, and it is not too much to say that it determined the course my life would follow.'

When he returned from the war this disciple of Barrès entered a world where he would have to live in peace-time. He thought it fit only for smashing to bits. At twenty-one one cannot see, and come away unscathed, a mangled belly, a head without a face, a leg on its own in a field. He could not come face to face with carnage without paying the price; nor with victory; nor with defeat either, other men's defeat. It was then, and out there at the front, that the most vital question he had to ask took shape, and probably, even then, the answer he wanted.

### *Une Vague de Rêves*

So he discovers 'Paris-sa-ville' (Paris, his city) and in it, himself. The experience he has brought back from his time in the army is not ripe. It will be ripe in 1959, for *La Semaine Sainte* (Holy Week). For the moment, insurrection is the order of the day: that is what sometimes happens after a war . . . But already in 1916 Aragon had lent an ear to certain echoes coming out of Zürich, where a Rumanian poet called Tristan Tzara was holding forth in a language that Aragon could readily understand. Were they really poems, these words so astonished at finding themselves strung together? But here again it was a question of demolishing things. What Aragon was ten years later to call *Une Vague de Rêves* (A Wave of Dreams) was still for Tzara only a hobby-horse nicknamed 'Dada.' 'Come in!' cried Dada. 'Don't be afraid we'll eat you.' For they devoured things, Aragon with the best of them, and what an appetite! Civilisation, science, ethics, what's all that? Religion? You must be joking . . . And don't go talking to us about poetry, we're just out of the trenches, we've seen what use 'literature' is. Art? Art is a lie, 'everything we see is false.'

In beaten, dismembered Germany this apocalypse was collecting fervent disciples around Tzara. Paris, for its part, looked

with amused indulgence on the pranks of its *enfants terribles*. Amid the illusory well-being of victory, the rebellion seems merely a gay scandal—and who can say how much was due to the sheer youthful pleasure they took in their revolt? Neither they nor anyone else yet guessed that they had taken a path from which modern art would never turn aside. After all, they were like all young men of their age, they were after the truth. They wanted man, the reality without a mask. Where could they catch him? In his hiding-place, of course: in his own dark places, in his deepest depths. 'It was the time,' writes Aragon, 'when, meeting at night as if after a day's shooting, we drew up our account of the day's sport, a list of the beasts we had invented, and the fantastic plants, and the images we had bagged.' It was a collective venture, and we cannot yet consider Aragon on his own: he, André Breton, Robert Desnos, and Benjamin Péret are always together: they have invented a 'truth game' and play it every evening. In the old Paris cafés that were made famous by their visits (even if they survive now only in their books) they apply the still brand-new Freudian techniques to what ever part of their own subconscious mind they are able to reach. In his *Paysan de Paris* (The Peasant of Paris), a documentary work but also a masterpiece, Aragon wrote: 'Amid the sound of voices, the bright light, the pushing crowd, Robert Desnos has only to shut his eyes and he speaks among the beer-glasses and saucers; the whole ocean crashes, with its prophetic uproar, its spray.' They practised automatic writing, but having conjured up the images they had no more power over them. 'We were under their dominion, we were their slaves.' And all they knew was that they had discovered a high explosive. 'Make no mistake, it is the enemies of order who are circulating this potion of the absolute. Come buy, come buy your soul's damnation! At last you can destroy yourself, here is

the machine to overthrow the mind . . . A new vice is born, a new intoxication is given to man—surrealism.'

But it came about that while they explored only the realms of the momentary they were creating most durable values—we are still living by these values. They wanted the poem to be nothing but 'a collapse of the intellect', and Aragon the future master of prose, the great poet to be, proclaimed peremptorily: 'The artistic attitude is a mask which compromises all human dignity.' But they had left one thing out of account—the fact that they were creators. Breton, Aragon—could they be satisfied with the 'momentary'? They were born to bestow form even upon the momentary. 'Thought begins in the mouth', they said. Perhaps so, but they put it down on paper and it became art. Worse, an art which very soon acquired practitioners. They were in despair. Their folly had opened a gap: a threshold had appeared where in new darkness there rose up new myths—the oldest in the world. They had created a new liberty, and followers rushed along the path of their delirium, pen in hand! Miserable imitations, mimicries, counterfeits—their magic has become a common-place, a meeting-ground for the vulgar. Their perilous chase, their frenzied quest, are now the fashion of the day. In a book entitled—paradoxically, he thought—*Le Traité du Style* (Treatise on Style) Aragon exclaims in disgust, 'The story goes that it's all a matter of acquiring the knack!' Yes, there was something to be angry about. Besides, they had moved on. They did not want a merely verbal revolt. 'Words . . . words . . .' Aragon wanted deeds. He had been 'won over to the principle of any revolutionary action . . . provided it leads far enough'.

It was to lead him to Moscow.

1928 is the year of decision. For Aragon as well as Breton.

Each of them will live totally in that 'state of frenzy' which is the condition of any surrealist action, but each will do it in his own way. I cannot help pondering over that odd coincidence—Aragon and Breton, and for each his beloved Stranger. To each his own magic, his own Russia. Breton meets Nadja in Montmartre, and Aragon, in Montparnasse, meets Elsa. Both women will take them where they wanted to go. They are the 'open sesame' of their secret cities and the key to the final gate, but it was in the men, in them only, that the plan for the journey had always been evolving . . . André Breton returns to the magic realms where Nadja guides him. Aragon goes with Elsa to Moscow. And each of them will inscribe the Russian name of his destiny upon his finest pages.

In going to Russia, Aragon was foreshadowing the great movement of sympathy that was going to steer French intellectuals towards communism, a movement which was to reach its highest point with Malraux's, then Gide's, visit to Russia, and of which the decline was signalled by André Gide's *Retouches au retour de l'U.R.S.S.* (Second Thoughts on Return from the U.S.S.R.).

Aragon's poem, 'Front Rouge' ('Red Front') which was to set off the famous 'Aragon affair', dates from his second visit to Russia. Let us not go into details: the ties of friendship warded off for a time the day of final separation. In 1931, the group he had helped to form broke with Aragon.

### *The Voice of the Nation*

'Poetry should be created by everyone, for everyone.' The man who wrote these words also wrote *Les Chants de Maldoror* (The Songs of Maldoror) which are assuredly written only for the few . . . and in order to get even farther away from 'every-

one' he signed these *Chants* not with his real name, Isidore Ducasse, but 'Comte de Lautréamont'.

In the darkness of the German occupation, Aragon became the poet who writes for everyone, and truly his poetry seems as if it were written by us, so truly was it written for us. The poems of *Le Crève-Coeur* (Heartbreak) rang through the country with their weeping refrains, their roundelay of grief, their rhymes facile and skilful thrown in together, and in them the France of music-hall songs and the France of disasters, the France of then and now, our 'sweet France', opened her arms, wept her tears, spoke to all, for all . . .

Mes pauvres enfants dit-elle  
 Mes beaux mes beaux canonniers  
 Elle en perd sa ritournelle  
 Si triste qu'elle s'assied. . . .  
 Mon coeur mon coeur en chancelle  
 Je n'ai rien dans mon panier  
 Je n'ai rien dans ma nacelle  
 Je vais voir dans mon grenier. . . .  
 Elle y trouve une crécelle  
 Un diplôme de pompier . . .  
 Des paroles éternelles  
 Un loto des coquetiers. . . .  
 Que voulez-vous donc la belle  
 Qu'est-ce donc que vous vouliez  
 Nos soldats à La Rochelle  
 N'ont ni vestes ni souliers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> My poor boys, she says, my handsome, handsome gunners. It makes her forget her refrain. She's so sad, she sits down. . . . My heart reels at it. I've nothing in my basket, I've nothing in my boat. I'll go and look in the attic. . . . She finds a rattle, a fireman's certificate. . . . some immortal words, a game of lotto, some egg-cups. . . . What did you want then, my fair maid, what is it that you wanted? Our soldiers at La Rochelle have neither coats nor boots.

Even isolated like this and deprived of the richness of the poem, do not these lines mean infinitely more than they say? And this is one of Aragon's strange exploits, probably the most surprising of all, although it seems he has not finished surprising us: the pioneer of surrealism, the despiser of nationalism, the scornful rebel, began to sing a song that everyone softly took up. Where now is the iconoclast, who attacked the monuments of country and religion, and deprived us of the goodly shield of reality to throw himself and us to the monsters, the monster-images that rose up at his call? Now we have popular poetry and the 'Complainte pour l'Orgue de la Nouvelle Barbarie'.<sup>1</sup> What long echoes this poetry can stir, with its rhythm and music, its rhymes and the break in the middle of the line, all there to aid the memory: a completely natural song, but heavy too with old treasures. There was something for everyone. Those who could hardly read found refrains to chant, others saw a flash of Hugo and gleams of Apollinaire, Villon and Shakespeare.

Ma patrie est une barque  
 Qu'abandonnèrent ses haleurs  
 Et je ressemble à ce monarque  
 Plus malheureux que le malheur  
 Qui restait roi de ses douleurs<sup>2</sup>

He always refuses to use punctuation marks, knowing that they

<sup>1</sup> Song for another Hurdy-gurdy. There is a pun on the two meanings of 'Barbarie'—Barbary, barbarism; and probably a reference to the titles of two poems by Jules Laforgue, 'Complainte de l'Orgue de Barbarie' and 'Autre Complainte de l'Orgue de Barbarie'. (Translator's note)

<sup>2</sup> My country is like a river-boat, abandoned by the haulers, and I am like the king, more unfortunate than misfortune, who yet remained king of his sufferings.

are unnecessary, but he restores the capital letter, which is the posture of the line, its way of rising up and standing erect.

The scornful seducer, who mocked at men and their countries—"I don't like people," he once said—now, his heart broken, speaks the unexpected truth.

Qu'importe que je meure avant que je dessine  
 Le visage sacré s'il doit renaître un jour  
 Dansons ô mon enfant dansons la capucine  
 Ma patrie est la faim la misère et l'amour<sup>1</sup>

Did he know in those other days—no, of course he didn't—that he loved this country, his country? How much invective he poured on it in the days between the wars, and what escaped his invective? What a brilliant intelligence and what sparks it threw off! And the technical inventions of 1934, the mocking delayed rhymes and run-together lines in *Hourra l'Oural* (Hurrah for the Ural):

Il y a des conseils d'hygiène jusqu'  
 au fond de la nuit du charbon<sup>2</sup>

But in France's night he sings as one sings in the dark, in order to keep up one's courage, in order not to lose hope:

Avec nos chansons couleur de nos plages  
 Et le bruit que font en tombant nos liens  
 Nous ferons lever le soleil qui vient. ....  
 On cherche très loin le ciel des images  
 Le ciel est ici vous n'en saviez rien.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> What does it matter if I die before I can draw the sacred face, so long as it will be born again some day. Let us dance, child, let us dance in a ring. My country is hunger, misery and love.

<sup>2</sup> There are hints on health, right into the coal-black night.

<sup>3</sup> With our songs the colour of our beaches, and the noise our chains

These poems, we dare to say so still today, took us in their arms, soothed our hurt, encouraged us to anger. And when with a new volume he gave the title *Les Yeux d'Elsa* (Elsa's Eyes) to a lament that was our own, it seemed natural to us all that he should mingle in his heart his country and his wife, and name the one when he spoke of love to the other:

Mon cher amour mon bel amour ma déchirure<sup>1</sup>

Let us set this line apart: very simple and with terrible force it speaks of the destiny of us all.

But once the war was over, once 'France's Reveille' (*La Diane Française*) had sounded and peace had returned, parties, enmities and critics took their places again, hearts no longer beat as one and people began to smile at those poems. Thanks be to those mockers: on the verge of a period when poetry is to place too much stress on technique we can thank them for *les Chroniques du Bel Canto* (The Chronicles of Bel Canto), which Aragon wrote for the weekly he edits, *les Lettres françaises*. In it he defends this poetry that sings, and even though he too reassumes his old disdain and mockery, and the lofty tone that offends some people, his passionate and reasoned defence of 'old-fashioned, vulgar, naive' poetry could not be more convincing. And if he takes 'bel canto' for his title it is not only in order to assert himself and to provoke: it is a reference to Stendhal, 'who wrote operatic music at a time when bel canto was in fashion,' and who said, among other things, 'In music one remembers well only the things one can reproduce.' And Aragon goes on, 'I

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make as they fall, we shall bring about the coming sunrise. . . . Some look far for the heaven we know from pictures. It is here and you knew nothing of it.

<sup>1</sup> My dear love, my fair love, my wound.

was speaking of bel canto: what do you call bel canto? I am asked. Ah, it is the indefinable: that element in words that suddenly takes on the dark taste of blackberries, the sadness of a ship setting sail, the gleam of love in women's half-closed eyes, the uniqueness of old love-songs, of your gesture when you loosen your hair. How can one explain this intoxication to those who feed on theories, to those disembodied drinkers of abstractions?

Is there any need for discussion when so many fragments of Aragon's poems cling in our memories? And will cling on, probably, long after we are gone, since they can be passed on so easily. It seems as if it is enough to hear them, they have no need to be fixed in print. In any case, whether it is needed or not, the defence of 'music-poetry' is taken up by the poet who long ago split poetry from top to bottom. This affords us a truly poetic satisfaction.

... But already in his youthful verse, at the time of the most revolutionary of his *Feux de joie* (Bonfires),—if not also in his Russian poems, which bore a 'physical' resemblance to those of Mayakowsky and Esenin, without their poetic depth—already, during the fifteen years of surrealism and futurism, when destructive flames consumed every 'rule of art,' one might notice here and there, in poems aimed at surprising and provoking, a sudden melodic line, an involuntary lyricism, a living breath. Literature students of the future will have some exciting essay-subjects.

### *La Semaine Sainte*

Aragon's most unpredictable departure is the one now brought about by *La Semaine Sainte* (Holy Week).

A right-wing weekly spreads his photographs across four columns, below a six-column article on 'A writer of extraordinary talent'. In his weekly 'Jottings' Mauriac informs us that

Aragon's name has been mentioned in the Académie Française, and it might very well be that a seat among this illustrious company, etc... One must have lived in France during the 'Stalinist' years to appreciate what a gulf has been bridged. Yes, it is another right-wing critic who proclaims in a periodical: 'It is not so easy to die...' And indeed, Aragon very nearly 'died', at least, as far as contemporary men of letters were concerned. He had shut himself off in a life of campaigning, his 'communist' poems were a mockery of his gifts, and the only reaction to his historical series of *Communistes* was boredom. The reader sighed for the loss of poet and prose-writer alike. Although they were recent, one went back to the novels which, since *Les Cloches de Bâle* (The Bells of Basle) claimed to be Marxist—perhaps they were? But who ever looked for politics there? There is History, that is all.

For Aragon has the natural gift of turning any story he tells into History. Personal destinies are never played out apart from the collective life: we never find those lives miraculously withdrawn from all contingency that occur in the French psychological novel. The heart, only the heart; as they used to say: psychological analysis.

But Aragon's characters, whether or not they resemble him—always belong to a period, an era, a society. The colours, the flavours of the book are drawn intimately from the essences of a historical period. But is it that which endears these novels to us, which fixes in our memories the fate of Pierre Mercadier when we read *Les Voyageurs de l'Impériale* (The Outside Passengers), and of Aurélien when we read and re-read his story? No. Above all, these novels are 'language'. And this language is magic.

An easy skill, acute and miraculously wide. Carried away, we join in the author's game: the sprightly phrase carries us

with it, at its own pace. We have become Aragon's accomplices in his irreverence, his love, his amusement; captives like him, with him, of the enchantments he conjures up to charm himself. There are many women in these pages and the feminine atmosphere is marvellously evoked. These Paulettes and Bérénices move in an air that has the warmth and colour of flesh, and outside their mirrors, their cushioned and scented domains, Paris lives its strange life, 'Paris, so beautiful it makes diplomats dream,' Paris always so close to its Seine, Paris that he has loved since his youth, since in 1924 he called his first great work *Le Paysan de Paris*.

'Historical' or 'realist,' one thing is certain: these are the most *autobiographical* of novels. I use the word 'autobiographical' in the particular sense demanded by Aragon's way of writing: this daring yet classical style, skilful yet careless, nonchalant yet deliberate, shows us the very nature of the author. These sentences, loose but never slack, elastic yet suddenly trenchant, very much 'written' yet constantly 'spoken', make us live to their rhythm, breathe as they breathe, and suppress our mood to share in theirs. I spoke of magic . . .

'A day will come,' writes Aragon, 'when people will re-read Barrès paying as little attention to his ideas as we do to those of Saint-Simon when we go to that great noble for lessons in language.' He could not have spoken more eloquently about himself, nor better proved himself to be the heir of that 'Barresian art of the sentence, that Barresian sense of the music of words.'

'There is something of Talleyrand in Aragon,' wrote one of our young critics à propos of *La Semaine Sainte*. To support his statement he instanced the contrasting themes of the book, with its apology for the revolutionary and its compassion for the

exile, its successive championing of the man of the right and the leftist. This is to judge a lasting work by ephemeral values.

We all know what this book is, this mighty flood of innumerable human beings, each one dragging along the road to the north his bewilderment, his questionings, his faith and doubt, distress and love, memories, and hope without an object; each one carrying on his soldier's saddle or the lordly cushions of a coach his past life and his life to come. And in this mass streaming from Paris to Lille, this collective mass without aim or reason, the inviolable solitude of each man, each sheltered in his dreams. An endless 'Night Watch', where the darkness is suddenly pierced, a gleam lighting up the truth and the conflict in a face; darkness again and the thunder of steps, clogs and wheels; then another gleam and another face, another bewilderment, a peasant or a prince at the crossing of his interior paths.

And this Romantic Théodore Géricault, still unknown except for the scandal aroused by his first pictures, as much a Romantic as other unknown men in this army, other young Royalist officers named Vigny and Lamartine, who are still unknown even to themselves. What is Géricault, hesitating to follow a fleeing king, to rejoin an ephemeral Emperor? A lost child among other lost children, and we were not at all surprised to hear Aragon mention one day in a broadcast, in connection with Géricault, the name of James Dean... So true is it that all romanticisms are akin.

All those men pressed against one another, in uniforms sodden with rain, that plodding progress of beasts and dreams, those noises, those gleams of light. And those villages living their obscure life beside the roads, their own life that knows nothing of other people, huddled as it is over its own poverty and ignorance—villages where the soldiers and their princes

throw themselves down to sleep . . . I shall not say any more about the book—you must read it, that's all—nor try to pick out the most admirable passages, nor evoke Caroline, whose brief appearance makes her unforgettable, nor Berthier, nor Richelieu, nor Marmont . . . I shall not stop to discuss whether it is a 'realist' novel, as Aragon claims, nor consider whether it owes much or little to 'La Chartreuse de Parme' and whether Géricault on the road north is like Fabrice on the field of Waterloo . . . Nor shall I even confess, astonished, that I read without the least tedium the boring pages—there are some—of the book and did not object to learning how they shod a horse and lifted peat in the time of Louis XVIII . . . This is what I want to say. While Napoleon's generals are meeting the army of the King; amid the throng, the gesticulations, the flashing surfaces, and the silences, at the heart's halting-places where the man dreams, while on leather saddle or cushioned seat his body goes on vibrating; when we have already been loaded with more lives, loves, memories, than thirty other books would have given us—someone stops and turns aside. It is the author.

And he confesses that what he is telling us about at this moment, this dream—it is not one of his characters who is dreaming it. A murderer draws close to his victim—already he finds the position of the heart, the knife is raised, 'Let me see, now . . . I know where that story comes from, don't you? From an English novel. . . Géricault can't have read *Martin Chuzzlewit* thirty or forty years before Dickens wrote it . . . whereas I, I! I've known it since I was a child . . . and not once but a thousand times I've seen it all in my sleep, the man going into the room and looking carefully for the position of the heart . . . I've been dreaming for four hundred pages or so. None of it ever existed, or rather it all exists for me now, in the age of railways, wireless, and radar . . .' Let us stop there, with Aragon.

It is in this chapter of the novel that he really awakens, to speak not about the book he read as a child, but about one of the decisive moments in his life of which I have already spoken. 'I am asleep. I am dreaming. It is I who am dreaming all that. Of course. For after all, all this is not Théodore's life, it's mine, don't you recognise it?' And then he speaks of Völklingen. If Private Géricault is present one night in the clearing at the secret meeting, the plot of the 'Equals' 'after which nothing would ever seem the same to him again', it is because in 1919 at Völklingen, near Saarbrücken, Private Aragon saw some German miners, at the pit-head, refusing to go down. It had been reported that there was danger of a fall in some of the galleries. 'I didn't understand much about it. I had never seen a mine, even in France.' Géricault, too, knew nothing of the problems that troubled all those people in the clearing. Well, would the French soldiers there to impose order have to fire on these recalcitrant workers, 'these men made of flesh, this murmuring wall, these eyes . . .' Nothing happened that night, except that this soldier, Aragon, 'felt (later, much later) that this night had helped to shape [his] destiny. I said nothing about it. It was like that, the romanticism of our young days. We couldn't let it appear. Just think, that was just when I had received 'Dada 3' from Zürich, *that* would have looked good to the security officer—there was a poem of mine in it, a hundred lines made to order, ending with . . .' Then, having lost the thread of his novel, which is supposed to take place in Holy Week 1815, Aragon comes back to it 'more at sea even than Théodore Géricault, musketeer in the King's army'.

That alone was what I wished to draw attention to in concluding this brief study. For thanks to *La Semaine Sainte* we have been able to understand Aragon. And if at this crossroad in his unpredictable life he may perhaps cross the bridge—the

Pont des Arts—which will take him to our Académie Française, let us hope that he will sit in the seat of Barrès. Not because, like Barrès, he has loved Bérénice; not because, like Barrès, he has cherished France, and expressed this love better than Barrès did. But because like Barrès, and better than he, he has breathed music into song and ballad, poem and prose, and joined words in a farandole that passes and re-passes in the memory, and reassures the heart.

# HERMANN BROCH: POET AND PHILOSOPHER

Robert Breuer

HERMANN BROCH, poet, novelist, and philosopher, belongs to the new generation of Austrian authors who, like the mythical Phoenix of hoary antiquity, rose out of the ashes of a Vienna gone forever, a Vienna of bliss and lightness of heart that had gaily waltzed until the hours of early dawn to the lilting melodies of the Strausses. Came the aftermath of a lost war, bringing in its wake poverty, inflation and the end of the well-to-do middle class. Came the cutting to pieces of the former proud Austrian-Hungary monarchy leaving only a weak torso of a formerly great country of old aristocratic origin. Out of these new environs of a new hardened generation that had survived World War I, new writers arose in whose works were present the peculiar spirit and aroma of the Danubian culture. Among them was Hermann Broch (1886-1951) whose literary output has now been published by the Rhein-Verlag (Zürich), in its original German; no doubt, these carefully edited *Collected Works* (in eight volumes), will reach a wide audience and would well deserve to be translated into foreign languages.

Although coming from and purposely educated in a highly industrialised environment to which he had devoted special absorbing studies, Broch was a man of rare inner wealth and great insight. When, in 1908, he had returned from the United States, where he had done thoroughly-planned research work

in textiles, he entered his father's factory in a leading position. But his inner voice and poetic calling were stronger than everything else and so, in 1927, he resigned and devoted all his time to writing.

During the dark days of revolutionary labour conflicts that ravaged his homeland bled white by four bloody war years, Broch was called upon as arbitrator and thus had the rarely offered opportunity of seeing political movements at their very source and of studying their economical, social and psychological roots. His sharp mind, understanding and compassion, penetrated the deep strata of a world in fermentation. This enabled him to study—in theory and practice—the multi-faceted causes of human mass-behaviour which led to his revolutionary theory of 'mass-madness', so poignantly depicted in his social-psychological essays and other works of deeply philosophical character; these were later published in English by the Office of Public Opinion Research of Princeton University which had sponsored his *Contributions to a Psychology of Politics*.

During all these formative years Broch patiently waited, until before his spiritual eyes his first great novel, *The Sleepwalkers*, took form, meaning, and shape. This is a significant work of inner greatness which, upon publication, was immediately acclaimed as the product of a rare genius. This was in 1931. *The Sleepwalkers* is a deeply philosophical trilogy, the theme of which is unique and new: that the world we live in is a world of sleepwalkers where man is no more the image of God, but moves around helplessly in the maelstrom of dark forces whirling around him. It is a tragic theme and the poet asks bitterly: 'Does this age possess a reality in which the meaning of our life has been preserved?' His answer, at the end, though affirmative, has been reached only by overcoming

strange inner powers opposing it. Finally, knowledge is the triumphant victor over its fiendish opponents.

Broch has always striven towards deeper knowledge which furthers all aims, especially the art of profound, logical thinking. In his paper, *James Joyce and the Present Time* (a speech written on the occasion of Joyce's fiftieth birthday), he discusses the osmosis between abstract and pictorial thinking, an osmosis which is a requirement—even the condition *sine qua non* of the modern novel. And he states: 'Philosophy has itself made an end to its age of universality, to the age of large compendia, and found it necessary to remove its most burning question from its logical abode to the field of mysticism. That is the point where the mission of the poet begins.'

The characterisation of Broch's work which merits careful, detailed analysis, lies in his insatiable hunger for knowledge and relentless search for perception of life's inmost realities. As a true poet, he formed his characters not as individuals of their native countries (be it Prussia, Pomerania or the Rhineland), but as general persons born in his time, persons who live, act, rejoice and suffer, wherever they may be.

Broch belongs to the few philosopher-writers who cannot be explained, introduced and understood *ex cathedra*, but only from that pulsating source of his work, meaning to say that one carefully chosen quotation gives a clearer picture of the author's style, ideas and thoughts than an abstract lecture could do. Let the last lines of *The Sleepwalkers* speak for themselves: 'And though we may be surrounded by the increasing silence of the abstract, and man, a prey to coldest necessity, be fleeing into oblivion . . . , it is the breath of the Absolute sweeping across the world, and from our sensing and feeling of the truth, the solemn certainty of the knowledge is born, that each one of us carried the divine spark in his soul and that the unity of all is

indestructible, indestructible the brotherhood of humbled mankind . . . , and from out the greatest darkness of the world, from out our greatest and bitterest darkness, the voice of terror and judgment, faintly it is heard among the silence of the Logos and yet borne and borne upward by it, through the noise of the non-existent; it is the voice of man and the peoples of man, the voice of comfort and hope and loving kindness: "Do no harm to yourself, for we are all still here."

There followed his meaningful novel *Bergroman* which he wrote and rewrote, always correcting, never fully satisfied. The third version was finally published under the title *Der Versucher* (*The Tempter*) but it has not yet been translated into English. *The Tempter* is a splendid symphony of masterly orchestration. All elementary forces, all the gigantic upheavals of fear and anxiety, the mark mysticism of olden-old customs, fiendish conspiracies—but also the insistent voices of good and courageous people and their passionate assistance against the unrushing evils, all these are combined and orchestrated by a master-composer. A timeless, nameless era is unveiled before our enraptured eyes. The story is free of all timely analogies and allusions, and the characters—although peasants of a small Austrian mountain-village—show all the scintillating facets of human nature. And there, a magic galaxy of myriads of phenomena and miracles unfolds itself: we see the first, timid hour of new life, weak and trembling in the dawn, and follow it to the very last hour of life's tragic ending. Here, in this complex contrast of widely-diverging feelings, of bitterly opposing political parties and allegiances, Broch's high poetic art achieves a culminating yet simple formula: in the very ruins of a spiritual upheaval which has changed an old, but now completely lost permanency of values into a mad new evaluation, he, the master of transcendentalism discovers eternal values.

Like a golden thread, a thought of deep allegory winds itself through the book: 'When one grows older, one learns that many things are an allegory.' In the vivid nature-descriptions of softly murmuring brooks and ever-changing meadows, of trees and woods, of the seasons in whose rhythmic succession also human nature changes according to eternal laws of death and renewal —this allegoric thought predominates. But in all these changes, there is one towering figure that remains the same throughout: All-Mother Gisson, the Erda-like, all-knowing and all-perceptive woman whose wisdom is like a bridge spanning over the abyss between yesterday and tomorrow, from times eternal to times immemorial. 'Prophezeiten ist erinnern'—to foretell the future means to immerse oneself in the dark memories of the past, seemingly lost and dead forever.

In his next work, *The Unknown Quantity* (well translated by Willa and Edwin Muir, and published in London, 1935), the melancholy story of a young scientist whose life is completely wrecked by this 'unknown quantity' is unfolded with the compassion so typically Broch. To the hero, if we choose to call him so, pulsating love and the breathing warmth of life are *terra incognita*. He lives in constant bitter strife with his family who so readily would give him the affection he craves, needs sorely, but repudiates.

'And out of the darkness that gave one birth, one would advance into new darkness, with stars glittering on the black background, stars that would glide along the surface of dark waters, shining out in the greatness and sublimity of death. Was that not enough?—And veiled ambiguity of the past and of the future would lighten a little in the vibrations of the peal rung by loneliness, rung in the heart. Goal of the future, beyond life and yet itself live. Oh, Love! Was that not enough?—Out there, life roared on its course, glowing down from afar, in-

comprehensible, uncanny, inexhaustible, but its course ran also throughout one's heart, just as incomprehensible, just as uncanny, just as inexhaustible, just as terrible. Was that not enough?

Later, when the 'real' tempter lashed out into Broch's homeland, the Nazi agents arrested the author in Alt-Aussee and threw him into jail. It was not the first time that Broch faced death; from the early days of his youth on he was prepared for it. But for him death did not mean the last and final phase, did not mean the end. He realised that not only mortals fell prey to death, but that ideas, values, institutions, forms and ways of life would perish too. Death as transfiguration, as transition, was but one station in the never-ending process of transformation. Only two years before, he had developed this idea, and later it formed the foundation for his most concentrated novel, *The Death of Virgil*.

With the powerful help of some English writer-friends Broch was liberated and allowed to enjoy again the blessings of freedom, in England and Scotland. From there he went to the United States, settling in New York first, then in Princeton, and finally in New Haven where he was Professor at Yale University (German Department). Broch devoted his years of exile in America to intensive writing assignments; with the financial assistance of the Oberländer Trust, the Guggenheim and Bollingen Foundations, and the generous help of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, he overcame life's hardships and regained zest and energy.

*The Death of Virgil* (masterfully translated by Jean Starr Untermayer, and published by Pantheon Books, New York, 1944) shows Broch at the zenith of his intellectual strength. It is a scintillating tone poem full of onomatopoetic effects describing the death of the great Latin poet in the palace of the

Emperor. It begins with Virgil's return from Greece and ends with the slow ebbing away in the luxurious palace where the noises and smells of the street, neighbouring houses and busy piers mingle with the perturbed thoughts of the dying poet. Here as in *The Sleepwalkers* neither overflowing praise nor any description of the unheard of beauty in expression, thoughts in the ebbing and flowing and ending of life, are adequate. Let the last words of this book convey to the reader Virgil's lofty conception of the world (which, in fact, is Broch's own view) :

‘ . . . that which sound was more than song, more than the striking of the lyre . . . it roared over and past the dying poet, swelling on and becoming stronger and stronger, became so overpowering that nothing could withstand it, the universe disappearing before the word, dissolved and acquitted in the word, while still being contained and preserved in it, destroyed and recreated forever, because nothing had been lost, nothing could be lost, because end was joined to beginning, being born and giving birth again and again; the word hovered over the universe, over the nothing, floating beyond the expressible as well as the inexpressible and he (Virgil) floated on with the word, although the more he was enveloped by it, the more he penetrated into the flooding sound and was penetrated by it, the more unattainable, the greater, the graver and more elusive became the word, a floating sea, a floating fire, sea-heavy, sea-light and notwithstanding it was the word, he could not hold fast to it and he might not hold fast to it; incomprehensible and unutterable for him was the word beyond speech . . . ’

This prose poem (which took the translator four years to translate) begins with a majestic Andante, passes on to an ever-faster growing Allegro and coming to the tragic ending in

rocking rhythms reproduces faithfully the sensation of the bark of death carrying the dying Virgil in the beyond. The Ode to Beauty in *The Death of Virgil* is a poem in the eloquent praise of beauty diametrically opposed in form, style and expression to Keats' classic 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever.' In metaphorical verses of transcendental beauty unsurpassed by any modern poet, beauty is compared 'to the foreshow of the divine which resembles divinity.'

Out of the very same material, Broch tenderly weaves the verses of his poems, flowery dreams and filigree-like after-thoughts which, like all his other writings, reflect the deep penetration into the hidden world of the inner self, revealing the antitheses so often met with in his style. In the preface of Broch's *Poems*, Professor Erich Kahler characterises the poet's undeniable flair for words such as 'but,' 'however,' 'still,' 'though,' 'yet,' which highlight the controversial cogency of his prose and which are also found in his verses. These words, softpedaling the expressions of thought, give vent for free reasoning and mobile precision of statements made; they narrow and curtail opinions, and, at the same time, provide the ritardando of their musical flavour with a full crescendo. This is a method of alternating restrictions, thus helping the author to comprehend the total and simultaneous complexity of many a human process.

Little known is Broch's drama *Die Entzündung (The Atonement)*. It is a hymn to sorrow and pain; grief-stricken mothers are standing before the graves of their dead sons, the rich and the poor levelled in their pain and lament: 'Your son was mine / and my son yours. / The death of our son / made us one. / My lap is empty, / desolate, both.'

A final evaluation of Broch's work is not an easy undertaking: while it may be difficult to describe the glowing prose, and even

more difficult still to endeavour translating it into a foreign tongue, Broch's verses breathe a natural simplicity, so far as the vocabulary is concerned, even though their hidden meaningful sense is embedded in deeper strata not easily detected by the reader. It is not enough to compare Broch's poetry and prose style with Rainer Maria Rilke, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and other great lyricists of the century: for Broch's style, subjective and objective at the same time, impressionistic even sometimes, shows great rhythmic and verbal suppleness and a fullness of touch and actual originality, not influenced by any literary current. Both the poetic and the spiritual prose pathos are sustained on the highest level. His poems are the best, most eloquent introduction into the very mind of Broch, Broch the man, and Broch the novelist-thinker. His impressionism, his lyrical, psychological and narrative powers join here and reveal the mentality of a great intellectual and wielder of words. But besides, they give an unerring clue to his own attitude towards life in general. Most decidedly, his prose and his poems belong to the so-called 'difficult' works, difficult not only because of style and syntax, but because of Broch's condensed and often abstract symbolism.

Broch affirms life even through his very conception of death, which, for him, is not an ending, but a beginning. Contemplating all existence with the stoic eye of the Greek philosopher Heraklitus who coined the classic *Panta Rhei*, he sees in it a flux of continuous metamorphoses. Here a few epigrammatic utterances from his *Death of Virgil*: 'We are captives of time, all of us; and this is even true of perception.'—'Man is held into creation and he holds creation in his hands.'—'The deed is the task of time, not the word, not art; time asks only for the perceptive deed.'—'Life was to be grasped only in metaphor, and metaphor could express itself only in metaphor.'—Broch

likes phrases such as 'the changelessness of interminable changes,' or 'things are bound in the perceptive web of time'—and again a kind of proverbial epigram: 'He who goes backward on his path, should feel ashamed.'

Not over Italy's night-sky alone is there a 'starry brightness', the same brightness also spreads over the tone and prose poems. Broch's life came to an end when a heart attack felled him on the 30th of May, 1951; his body was found in the little cottage in which he lived on the campus of Yale University. Death had finally overtaken the man who deemed life's end to be nothing but another step towards life itself. His remains are buried in the tiny village cemetery of Killingwoth, Connecticut, near the house of his good friends, Seidel-Canby. Yale University keeps his manuscripts and papers in a place of honour in the institution's Goethe room. Broch's death-mask looks down from the wall and it is as if the poet and his work were reunited forever. But even after his death Broch is not yet known as he should be known all over the world—as one of the profoundest modern novelists and poets, philosophers and thinkers of our era. The trinity of Broch's whole life and work: world, heart, and soul, echo from every page he wrote. 'Whenever he writes, whenever he depicts our times in his novels, poems, essays, plays, he does so to help to overcome them,' Fritz Lehner once stated. 'And in this he succeeded, because outward occurrences always signify with him deep inner meaning.'

The short inscription he penned in a book presented to a friend sheds a revealing light on the great man and poet, the relentless seeker and powerful seer that was Hermann Broch:

Bücherschreiben,  
für viele bloss Zeitvertreiben  
und der Zeit sich verschreiben  
mit Büchervertreiben.

Aber ein Buch zu gestalten  
heisst die Zeit festhalten  
und sie gestalten,  
den Sinn zu erhalten—  
zeitlos ihr Ton  
im Pantheon.

# SWEDISH LETTERS IN RECENT YEARS

Daniel Hjorth

*(Translated by Alan Blair)*

IN the latest literary debate in Sweden there was a discussion as to how far an author can influence social development. Many speakers despaired of the modern writer's chances of playing an effective part as tribune of the people in the same way as the socially interested authors at the close of the 19th century. Naturally, the reality near at hand does not offer an equally rewarding field of activity as was the case sixty years ago, but when the greatest social reform since the introduction of universal suffrage—legal superannuation for all citizens—was recently carried out in Parliament, it was noticeable that in the unusually fierce propaganda fight preceding the passing of the bill, the writers had been conspicuously silent. The former 'indignation poets' and proletarian authors had other fish to fry and were not concerned in helping the class they had come from to plug the last draught-hole in the secure cottage of the welfare state.

At the beginning of the decade (in Sweden there is a proclivity to divide the literary development into even ten-year periods) the young writers were accused of being indifferent to social affairs. Their writing was considered precious and escapist. If one inclines today to a similar evaluation, it is not because one finds no social perspective in their works but because one feels surfeited with roguish naivety. The disturbing fact that home politics are boring and therefore of little or no interest to the

majority, is one which the politicians are the first to deplore. The big, easily understood questions have been settled—there is unanimity more or less over foreign politics—and the gradual but decisive changes in the social structure are nowadays taking place on an economic plane which is hidden from the layman's eyes. No one is inspired with poetry about 'the Outer Seven,' no one is tempted to write a novel about the horrors of investment tax.

One has an uneasy feeling that the Swedes are discontented in the country 'whose keyword is contentment.' Discontent is akin to satiety. One longs to find a way out of the stagnation that lays a film of dreariness over life. The Social Democratic party, having now reigned for nearly thirty years, dreads inner stagnation like the plague, the country's comfortably placed men flee from it in chromium-gleaming hire-purchase cars and the young people break out with motorbikes and knife attacks. Sweden has more cars per head of population than most other European countries; it also has very serious youth problems. What have the writers to offer? As yet none has managed to present an analysis of present-day Welfare Sweden with sufficient rigour and artistic buoyancy. The writers have made their way towards a wider sphere—they have placed man by himself in a more spacious, but also a more desolate, world than the snug suburban garden of the social state. They have given shape to their experience of the cold atomic war's reality in legends about doomsday man in the same way as Ingmar Bergman has done in the medieval film saga *Det sjunde inseglet* (The Seventh Seal). The point on which they have joined issue is whether the Swedish army is to be equipped with nuclear weapons—a universally-local debate in which the writers can perhaps re-occupy their former positions as leaders of opinion.

Space, at its most naked, arches above the human beings in

Harry Martinson's *Aniara* (Bonniers 1956). The author, who went to sea in his youth, has praised nomadic life in many earlier works; he has told of seafarers and in his latest great novel *Vägen till Klockrike* (The Road to Klockrike) he gave a well-informed romantic picture of the life of a tramp. Now he has left the narrow confines of the earth and in 103 iambic songs he describes a future voyage in space in a language which has availed itself of modern natural science's terminology but also works with newly-constructed concepts so closely allied to already existing expressions that they seem quite intelligible, in much the same way as we think we find a meaning in Lewis Carroll's '... the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe.'

The spaceship 'Aniara', with eight thousand passengers on board, has started on one of her regular trips from Earth, which is badly damaged by radiation, to Mars. On the sixth day—the last but one of the voyage—the ship is forced to swerve in order to avoid a small, previously unknown planet, gets off course, misses her destination and hurtles on towards the constellation of Lyra. The only contact with the outer world is through the medium of Mima, an ingeniously devised observation instrument which picks up images, sounds and smells, but gives no indication of the position of its sources. It is worked by the poet, who only allows the passengers to know about the wonderful visions so as to keep up their courage. He has assumed the role of priest. The pilots have realised that the voyage is hopeless, the span of human life is not long enough to reach Lyra. By degrees the harsh truth also dawns on the passengers; they then deaden their anguish with frenzied feasting and orgiastic dancing. When Mima is shattered one day they are imprisoned in a blind shell on the way to an unknown goal, until all life dies onboard.

When *Aniara* was published it was regarded as science fiction. A year later the earth satellites introduced a new era for the inter-planetary communication system. *Aniara's* reality became tangible. But the poem about the voyage into space can just as well be brought down to an earthly level. The technical equipment does not prevent us from conceiving *Aniara* as a picture of our world, piloted by leaders who have realised the hopelessness of reaching a fixed goal with the course embarked upon and inhabited by people who take refuge in poetry in order to forget; when this is no longer capable of easing their distress, they abandon themselves to more potent means of enjoyment. Or as Harry Martinson himself expresses it: '*Aniara* tells of a journey into space in a very distant future. Yet in reality this is a pretext. What it tries to give is, above all, a vision of our own time, of life's journey through our own emptiness. Its perspective is that of widened reflection, with the narrator's instrument transferred into a symbolic world in which the poem's symbols link up with those of modern natural science.' *Aniara* is 'The Waste Land' of the space age—even as works of art they are on a par—but more cruel, desolate and hopeless. The poem has formed the basis of an opera with music by Karl-Birger Blomdahl, and it is perhaps in this form that the fascinating poem about the uncannily present future will reach a wider public outside Scandinavia.

Pär Lagerkvist—Nobel prizewinner in 1951—has gone back to antiquity to find the setting for his version of the drama of forsaken man. His novel *Sibyllan* (The Sibyl), (Bonniers 1956), is about a prophetess at the Delphic oracle and no doubt links up with Lagerkvist's previous historical novels, *The Dwarf* and *Barabbas*. In *The Sibyl* man is just as defenceless as in *Aniara*, he senses a god in cruelty and ecstasy, but never succeeds in finding out anything about him. The novel is constructed as a

conversation between the aged Pythian, rejected from the service of the god, and the never-ageing Ahasuerus; the sibyl's account of her life takes up most of the book. She has met the god in devotion and love and the god has demanded everything of her; Ahasuerus directs his hatred at the god because he can never find peace. Who is god? *The Sibyl* ends in uncertain mysticism. Pär Lagerkvist has no fixed answer to give, his long tussle with the problem of life has convinced him that god is unknowable. It is one of his most important characteristics, that which binds and frightens the serious thinker. The god can perhaps be identified with life; if life is cruel, the god is cruel, if life is love, then the god is love. Pär Lagerkvist tells us this in language which is that of simple folk, but his art is able to give it dimensions which make it possible to create with mastery scenes both of ecstatic intensity and pastoral peace.

Eyvind Johnson keeps changing from antiquity to the present time in his latest novel *Molnen över Metapontion* (The Clouds above Metapontion) (Bonniers 1957). Johnson is a dauntless prose experimenter who likes to swing between different epochs in his books and who, as no one else in Sweden, has acquired and developed the tactics first introduced by Proust, Mann and Joyce. He is an alert observer of the international political scene and during the last war it was chiefly his novels, analytical of the time, which strengthened intellectual youth's will to resist. *The Clouds above Metapontion* is set partly in the Attic colony in Southern Italy in the 5th century B.C., partly in a German concentration camp during the war and in Italy during the fifties, where a Swedish journalist has gone to examine the plausibility of a French professor's theories about the author of *Anabasis*. Eyvind Johnson has a brilliant knack of letting the various periods of time merge one into the other; he can analyse the present age against the background of antiquity, clothe

modern phenomena in historic apparel, demonstrate his deep knowledge of humanity and advocate his humanistic attitude to life.

Lars Ahlin belongs to a younger generation than those already mentioned, but has already won his spurs among the front-rank authors. He has a teeming imagination and one is inclined to believe him when he says he has material for hundreds of novels. Sometimes his fantasy runs away with him, he is enticed into following too many threads of plot and enswathing his message in dense clouds of words. As a scenepainter and creator of people's exteriors Ahlin is an exuberant and competent realist, but this does not stop him from putting thoughts into the mouths of his artisan characters which seem far too learned and complicated for these simple minds. He is conscious of the discrepancy between the external and the internal in his character drawing, but considers it of no importance. He does not side with his characters, but identifies them. The writer must be an intercessor for all the miserable and unfortunate—a calling which he can only fulfil if he has placed himself on the point of absolute nothingness. This philosophy has its personal basis in the experiences Ahlin had as an out-of-work tramp in the thirties, but has also drawn theoretic material from Lutheran theology, Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky. One easily traces the conception of 'the holy sinner' in his work, but recognises Prince Myshkin's situation. Ahlin has most recently set forth his thoughts in *Natt i marknedstältet* (Night in the Fair-tent) (Bonniers 1957), in which the boy Zacharias is cicerone in a bewildering world populated by people who represent different alternatives of life and preach the Ahlin religion. Among other things, the author is also a brilliant portrayer of love, and in *Gilla gång* (Normal Course), (Bonniers 1958) he tells of an active sexual relationship between

husband and wife who have turned fifty.

The most well-deserved literary success of 1958 was achieved by Walter Ljungquist. Since his first appearance in 1933 this author, who will soon be sixty, has written a score or so of novels, all of which have been polished works of art but which have seldom gained recognition beyond a circle of enthusiastic connoisseurs. Walter Ljungquist is a superb artist, who has depicted the Swedish summer in a masterly way, with almost tropical heat and jungle foliage, and shown himself a fine portrayer of adolescent youth. He often gives his novels the excitement of a detective story, but in *Ossian* (Bonniers 1958) he tells in a simple, but artistically perfect way of a man's journey through life. Ossian—the name is borrowed from Macpherson's bard—has grown up under difficult conditions and develops from an affected shop-assistant into a rather pathetic literary dilettante. His life is full of mistakes and reverses, but he succeeds in living it with an integrity and natural dignity which is impressive. Ljungquist's novel can be considered—even if the author has guarded against such a conception—as a saint's saga of modern times, with a very amusing saint; a story of the holy sinner's potentialities.

Many other authors of an older generation would be worth mentioning. Vilhelm Moberg's name can never be omitted when talking of modern Swedish literature. The third volume of his novel-cycle about the fate of Swedish emigrants in the USA appeared in 1956, the fourth, and final one, is expected in the autumn of 1959. It can be said that this work is already certain of a position as a classic in Sweden, comparable in epic breadth and grandeur only with Selma Lagerlöf's finest works. Ivar Lo-Johansson—the special portrayer of the Swedish cotters—has published several more volumes of his autobiographical chronicle, which, apart from painting a life-size portrait of an

individualist, also gives a splendid description of the peasantry and farm-servants at the beginning of the century, a Bohemian's life in Stockholm in the thirties and the hard efforts of the present members of parliament to get better conditions for the workers. Sivar Arnér's love story *Som svalorna* (Like the Swallows) (Bonniers 1956) offers an analysis of a male-female relationship of a frenzy scarcely seen since Strindberg's days. Among the poets, one dwells with pleasure on Nils Ferlin's weary poetic sighs in *Från mitt ekorrhjul* (From my Squirrel Wheel) (Bonniers 1957) and on *Terziner från okonstens tid* (Terza Rima from the Age of Non-Art) (Norstedts 1958) by the brilliant rhymer, love poet and mystic, Hjalmar Gullberg.

The older writers create the lasting masterpieces of the age, but it is the younger ones who formulate the catchwords which give an epoch its name. No organised group with a fixed programme has appeared in Sweden for a long time; the young writers of the fifties in particular have been very disinclined to theorise. The fact that one seems nevertheless to discern common features must be due to causes which it is hazardous to assess while development is still going on. It is above all important to realise that one is working the whole time with drastic simplifications. The easiest thing is to register the points where the new literature differs from the old—the reaction against the prevailing form. The novel of the forties was an intellectual problem novel which made use of intricate psychological analysis at the expense of epic mobility and breadth.

The new novel has taken a course which was marked out during the forties by the tardily discovered pioneers Tage Aurell and Stina Aronson. New environments have been exploited—preferably remote country districts—, the life of the common people has once more been portrayed (with a tendency to grotesque exaggeration) and certain authors have a special

fondness for comprehensive epic effusions. The new prose is akin to an older Swedish tradition, to the writers of the early part of the century, who were disciples of Dickens, and to the detailed descriptions of national life by writers in the thirties.

A paradoxical parallel is to be found in the American Wild West film, which in the same way uses a simplified setting in which a human conflict drama with a ready appeal is unfolded—the individual's fight for right in contrast to a cowardly, unstable community, and which, at its artistic best ('High Noon', '3.10 to Yuma', 'The Tin Star') attains a symbolic effect far beyond that which is bound to locality and time.

A schematic condensation of this kind is to be found in Sara Lidman's first novel *Tjärdalen* (Bonniers 1952). I am mentioning such an old novel by such a young writer because Sara Lidman is the sensation of the fifties. Her first appearance was a surprise almost unequalled in Swedish letters. She has been rapturously greeted by critics and public and she has plainly shown that she can live up to the demands made on her. Her novels, three to date, are all set in a desolate little village not far from the Arctic Circle, where people unite in work and gossip. In her latest book *Regnspiran* (The Swift), (Bonniers 1958), she tells of an unloved girl's attempts to attain love and how the village shatters her prospects with intolerance and the blackest hypocrisy. Sara Lidman has also appeared as a playwright with a play in the same setting, but in addition with a drama—*Aine* (1957)—which is the most intelligent attempt to put a finger on the sick spots in today's class-circulating community,

Somewhat unfairly, Sara Lidman has been made to overshadow other excellent writers with similar aesthetic methods to her own. Björn-Erik Höijer deals with the same northern environment and in *Mannen på myren* (The Man in the Swamp)

(Bonniers 1957) tells in a most moving way of two lovers in their fight against the religiously obsessed collective of the village. Another novel about two lovers and a religious sect mentality is Sven Rosendahl's *Midsommardomen* (The Midsummer Sentence) (Bonniers 1958). Rosendahl, who at the outset was purely a depicter of nature, has developed of recent years into one of the most interesting prose writers. *Lojägarna* (The Lynx Hunters) (Bonniers 1956) is another example of his distinguished art. Per Olof Sundman, with only two books—*Jägarna* (The Hunters) (Norstedts 1957) and *Undersökningen* (The Examination) (Norstedts 1958)—has shown great promise. He makes use of brief intimations and simple situations, which he then leaves to the reader to work out.

Some of the new portayers of the life of the common people have introduced stronger picaresque elements in their plots, at the same time as they tend to let character drawing verge on caricature. Artur Lundkvist—a poet intoxicated with life and a brilliant critic, with the presentation of foreign literature as a speciality—has, in *Vindingevals* (Tiden 1956), told of his childhood in the South of Sweden. Arne Sand's *Ljugarstriden* (The Liars' Battle) (Bonniers 1956) is a novel with an extremely complicated structure, in which one symbolic stratum after the other comes to light if the reader takes the trouble to dig below the surface. Per Wästberg has made use of a picaresque approach in his description of the Stockholm he loves so well. In his latest Bildungsroman *Arviagaren* (The Heir) (Wahlström & Widstrand 1958) his hero experiences life as a voyage of discovery among picturesque people and things in Hamburg. A promising new writer in this field is Ake Wassing, who in *Dödgrävarens pojke* (The Gravedigger's Son) (Gebers 1958) humorously depicts a boy's childhood among paupers in an old-age home and his search for his mother.

Not all young Swedish prose, of course, falls within these roughhewn categories. Much of the best and most genuine has been created by writers with a completely different approach. Lars Gyllensten is a special case. He is an assistant professor of medicine, but at the same time one of the most adroit of the young writers. What he excels in is microscopic mental analysis, a skill which he demonstrated particularly in the remarkable novel about man's growing old, *Senilia* (Bonniers 1955). In *Senatorn* (The Senator) (Bonniers 1958) he relates how a high-level functionary in a totalitarian state caves in under the leader's pressure. Birgitta Trotzig—also a very intelligent critic—in *De utsatta* (The Exposed) (Bonniers 1957) paints with dark, smouldering colours and religious passion a picture from 17th-century Scania, when the province was wrested from the Danes and the inhabitants were exposed to terrible suffering. Sven Fagerberg—a refrigeration engineer—is the country's most devoted Joyce disciple and caused a great stir with his intellectually brilliant first novel *Höknatt* (Hawk Night) (Wahlström & Widstrand 1957), about the spiritual deep-freezing of modern man. Willy Kyrklund is a misanthropic painter of miniatures. Knut Nordström has made pathologically intimate analyses of solitude and life together with others in his pastiche novel *Doktor Mirakels medicin* (Doctor Miracle's Medicine) (Bonniers 1957) and a collection of short stories *Tristan* (Bonniers 1958), and Kurt Salomonsson has tried to renew portrayal of the working class with *Grottorna* (The Caves) and *Mannen utanför* (The Man Outside) (Norstedts 1957 and 1958).

In a small, wonderfully bracing book Werner Aspenström has described his childhood in a mining district in Central Sweden. Aspenström's main achievement, however, has been within the sphere of poetry, where, in a personal and eccentric

way, he has managed to combine the prose writers' provincial originality with a fresh naivety. It is perhaps more difficult to trace general trends in the development of poetry than in prose. Here again, the contrast to the forties must supply the salient features. Poetry then was formally advanced and, with a compressed imagery, sought to give expression mainly to the war years' mood of anguish. The poetry of the fifties is fashioned on more traditional models; it is clearer, the poets make use of older verse forms in a new way and one soon notices a keen interest in the low view both as regards choice of subject and structure. Revue and cabaret songs, for example, are a *genre* which has been practised by many of the foremost young poets.

Lars Forssell has caught the anxiety of the new age in his nonchalantly pungent revue songs, but has also revealed his need of solace in the more serious collection of poems *Telegram* (Bonniers 1957). Bo Setterlind is the decade's kindly *enfant terrible*, who, wrapped in the poet's voluminous cloak, has poured out his ever-flowing inspiration in, for example, *Svävande över paniken* (Floating above Panic) (Bonniers 1956) and *Via tomteten* (Via Emptiness) (Bonniers 1958). Majken Johansson is the foremost of the poets who have emerged from the academic environment of Lund, in the South of Sweden, where irony and sleight-of-hand with words have been cultivated for decades. Her poetry has features of savage demonic obsession and she testifies to an impassioned sincerity which one has often looked for in vain in her colleagues. *I grund och bottan* (At Heart) appeared in 1956 (Bonniers), and after her most recent book *Andens undanflykt* (Escape of the Spirit) (Bonniers 1958) she enlisted in the Salvation Army. Folke Isaksson, in common with Tomas Tranströmer, gives a sensitive portrayal of landscape and people.

The foregoing survey has, of course, merely grazed the main

trends of present-day Swedish letters. I have dealt only with fiction and poetry. The art of the essay has not been practised to any great extent in Sweden and the essays which do appear are usually a collection of newspaper articles. There is a wealth of travel books, and some of these writers gain peak results. But even an account of fiction and poetry must be superficial—500 novels, short stories and poems are published in Sweden annually. Another critic would no doubt have included other names, but I hope nevertheless that the reader will get the impression that literature in Sweden is very much alive, that the writers are concerned with the crises of the time and that Sweden as a literary country can hold its own in competition with other nations.

# EASTERN EUROPE: AN ESSAY FOR ADULTS

Abraham Rothberg

*Here tawdriness takes hands with compassion:  
What has grown into stone will endure.  
Here you will learn your letters  
Future poet of Warsaw.  
It is natural for you to love them.  
I loved other stones,  
Grey and great,  
Ringing with memories.*

'A Poem for Adults'  
by Adam Wazyk

IT is the rare society that is hospitable to writers, not only because writers, presumably always afflicted with the 'divine discontent' or the jaundiced eye (depending on the point of view), have always considered social reality with slightly less than three cheers, but because serious writers—and it is these we are really interested in—have generally preferred to seek their own truths rather than the 'revealed' or 'accepted' truths of the societies in which they lived.

Simultaneously, to some degree, every society has attempted to have its writers confirm its 'accepted' truths; that is, the basic foundations of its world view and social organisation, either by seduction or coercion. Most societies, therefore, publicly pretend to believe that any literary and intellectual efflorescence is somehow a blessing of their particular virtues and time, a kind of absolution for the sins of their realities:

they call it their *culture*, and in part they genuinely believe it. Communist societies have sinned more grievously than most in this regard and have, therefore, been some of the most coercive toward their writers. This is in part due to the outrageous respect and contempt (in the Freudian sense, an almost classical ambivalence) for *the word*. Because the Communists were committed to the belief that theirs was a superior society, a step-up on some evolutionary scale from capitalism, they always have taken the stance that they had to produce—as a logical consequence and justification of their superior system—a superior 'culture'.

This has given Communist writing (and the Communist criticism of literature) an air of one shoe factory competing with another, and has fundamentally politicalised all Communist writing. This attitude toward literature—literature as *product*, and as a product of a particular world view—has given it its basic content and coloration, in their argot called socialist realism, and made Stalin's dubbing of writers as 'engineers of the soul' a not too metaphorical description of reality.

But the Communists have been plagued by the fact that after the first post-revolutionary burgeoning in the Soviet Union, there was virtually no writing of importance for some thirty years—until Stalin's death in 1953—and it is no accident that the period immediately following his death is called—significantly, after the title of a novel by Ilya Ehrenburg in 1954—'the thaw'. The thaw was a period of area-wide permissiveness—a relaxation of political, economic and cultural controls—which from 1954 through 1956, particularly in the Satellite countries, gave rise to a stream of new, intense, and sometimes raw writing, most of it severely critical of Communist life.

Unfortunately, this constant and inextricably interwoven relationship between politics and literature in the Communist



*Der Stern, Hamburg*

Vladimir Dudintsev



Anthony Hartley

THE  
AND SOME



**EDITOR**

**CONTRIBUTORS**



*Gerron*

John Wain



Marnie Pomeroy

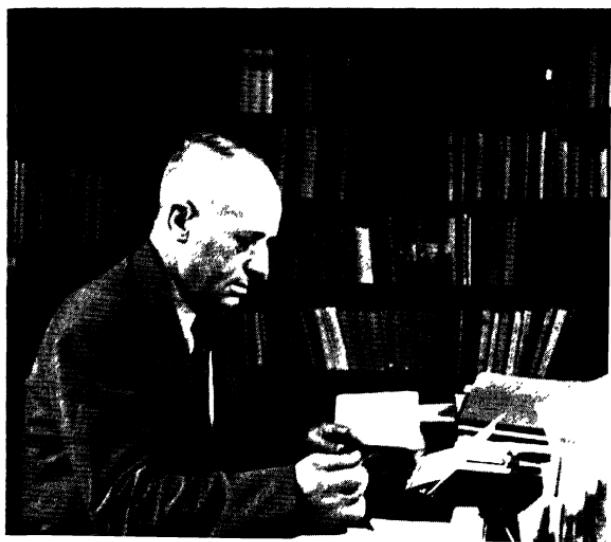




EASTERN EUROPE

Antoni Slonimski (Poland)

Lyudmil Stoyanov (Bulgaria)



world always necessitates discussing state policy far more than literary merit.

By mid-1957, the Soviet Union and the Satellites had begun to recover from the death of Stalin and his posthumous denigration at the Soviet 20th Party Congress, the Polish October change of government and finally, and perhaps most important, the Hungarian revolt. In the latter two cases especially, the writers had played very important political roles—in bringing Gomulka to power in Poland and in catalysing the forces and providing the intellectual framework for the Hungarian insurrection. Even in the USSR during the summer of 1956, writers like Dudintsev in *Not By Bread Alone* and Granin in *Personal Opinion* were still writing somewhat beyond the restrictions of socialist realism. A devastating criticism of Communist life had leaped up all over the orbit, an excoriation of Communist fulfillment as against socialist promise, of means and ends; in short, of the whole business, and it was a criticism so intense that it had, from a political point of view, to be stopped.

The thaw began to re-freeze immediately after the Hungarian revolt when the leading Hungarian writers were jailed, dropped from their jobs, barred from publication, or forced to flee the country. Poland followed quickly with a crackdown on writers and journalists which led in September of that year to the suspension of the Warsaw student weekly *Po Prostu*, a decision which provoked five days of street riots in Warsaw. The attack against writers was then incorporated into a campaign against 'revisionism'—a term frequently employed though warped and abused, but by which the Communist leadership means all those—intellectuals, Party people, bureaucrats, etc.—who wanted fundamental changes (i.e., revisions) in the organisation of

Communist society and ideology, such as, for instance, a reduction in the tyranny of the Communist Party; a playing down of the notion of class struggle; a greater internal democracy both generally and in the Party; reduction of warlike propaganda; etc.—a point of view which many of the writers did, in fact, support. There were attacks against the Czech writers by their Writers' Union—'It is the misfortune of some of our present young utopians that they see before their eyes only the vision of an idealised society. Socialism for them is the expression of absolute truth, understanding and justice... In reality, their ideas are nothing but romanticism and divorce from reality...' The Bulgarian Writers' Union repeated the complement for its nation's writers, accusing them of undermining socialist art: 'The weakest, most inexpressive, stereotyped and unsuccessful creations of socialist art were brought to the fore with the aim of discrediting and practically refuting socialist-realist method... One writer even went so far as to maintain that literature must be kept apart from actual politics...'

Literature was even worrying the Soviet Union and that spring and summer, Khrushchev himself made three speeches attacking writers for being critical of communist life and singling out Dudintsev particularly.

In the face of this kind of assault in a totalitarian country, a talented writer is faced with three choices. First, he can submit and write according to Party dictates. In so doing, he runs the risk, if not the certainty, of turning out poor or mediocre work because he violates the imperatives of his own nature and viewpoint. Second, he can compromise to some extent; that is, he can eliminate what is actively hostile to the regime from his work, or disguise it, so that it may be published; or he can

retreat from the problem into historical novels (where the contemporary parallels may either be more safely drawn or avoided altogether), or into translating foreign classics or editing new editions of domestic ones. Lastly, he may make two choices of revolt: he can either continue to write as 'he pleases' or as he must, and run the risk of not being published, losing his job, and ultimately of being jailed or otherwise punished; or he can refuse to write at all and maintain steadfast silence. In the Communist world two special terms have grown up for the second choice and for the second half of the third choice; they are, respectively, 'internal emigration' and 'conspiracy of silence'.

All these choices were exercised in varying degrees by writers throughout the area, frequently under great pressure, and irrespective of the choice, their weight was felt.

From the time the revolt in Hungary was crushed, the leading writers lapsed into silence. The Party and government mounted a campaign to breach that silence, but was unsuccessful until a year later, in November 1957, when several prominent Hungarian authors—among them Peter Veres, Gyula Illyes, Pal Szabo and Aron Tamasi—signed a protest denouncing the UN Resolution against Soviet intervention in Hungary. At the same time, a new literary magazine was issued, *Kortars*, in which some of the writers began to publish. Simultaneously, the government meted out severe sentences to several of the best-known Hungarian writers for participating in the revolt: Tibor Dery, Gyula Hay, Zoltan Zelk and Tibor Tardos.

But regime dissatisfaction with the silence and the product, howsoever small, was continued. For the first time since 1950, no Kossuth Prizes were awarded to writers and the official explanation offered was that 'no work of high ideological or literary merit was published'. The regime's dissatisfactions

were made specific in a May article in *Elet Es Irodolam*, which commented: 'As years have gone by, Hungarian socialist literature—which began with such an upsurge in the post-1945 period —had not only come to a standstill in the blind alleys of fruitless discussions, but is slowly falling to pieces—and silence reigns.' The silence particularly frightened and displeased the Communists, for if literature was product, they were not meeting the norm; furthermore, compulsively, they had to have words, almost any words, because a flourishing socialist society must, after all, produce a flowering socialist literature.

In July, a full-scale regime attack was launched on the leading school of Hungarian writers: the Populists. Whether its intention was to produce controversy, or merely to smoke out dissidence, or both, is difficult to say, but the government's concern and insistence was more than apparent.

The Populist or Village Explorer movement had begun in Hungary before World War I, and arose on the basis of demands for social and political reforms in the Hungarian countryside. Nationalist, romantic in temperament, as a movement the Populists contained all shades of the political spectrum, though the largest part of them were liberal parliamentarians. In foreign policy, the movement advocated a 'third course' program, or a middle road between German and Russian expansionism in Eastern Europe. Shaped and given impetus by writers Endre Ady, Szigmond Morig and Dezso Szabo, and by composers Bela Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly, the movement was carried on by a second generation which included the nation's major writers: Nemeth, Veres, Szabo, Kodolanyi, Illyes, Tamasi and Erdelyi.

The Populists came into conflict with the Communists after World War II and remained the nucleus of literary-intellectual resistance to the regime. In 1958, a new campaign against

them was mounted led by Party Secretary Kadar himself: 'We do not consider the Populists a literary movement, but a political coterie which explicitly or not opposes the leading role of the working classes.' But they were also accused of much more than that, of being racist, nationalist, aiding the imperialists and the bourgeoisie by promulgating a 'third road' policy, and besides, it was pointed out, they were out-of-date, obsolete.

Gradually, the attack on the writers and the necessity for them to earn a living produced some results. Many of the younger poets began to publish in 1958, glad to have an opportunity to replace those who still—like Jozsef Erdelyi, Jozsef Fodor, and Lajos Kassak, not to mention the poet laureate of Hungarian poetry, Gyula Illyes—remained in the 'conspiracy of silence.' This new poetic school has abandoned not only socialist realism, but all realism, and has developed a surrealist-symbolist mode similar in style, though not in substance, to Eliot, Auden and St. John Perse. In 1958, two volumes of poetry of considerable distinction were published: Ferenc Juhasz's collected poems, *The Country of Breeding*, and Sandor Weores' collected poems, *Tower of Silence*.

In prose, too, 1958 saw some distinguished writing published. Two of the most important writers published books: Aron Tamasi published a selection of his short stories, *The Wings of Poverty*, and Laszlo Nemeth published a new novel, *Eszter Egeto*, a work that delineates small town life between the two World Wars. Miklos Szentkuthy, the Hungarian counterpart of Joyce, also came out of his literary isolation and published a historical novel about Mozart called *Divertimento*, a surrealist rendering of a historical panorama and a satire of socialist revolution. Janos Kodolanyi, who had not been permitted to publish until 1956 because he was accused of being an 'extreme rightist,' has now been welcomed back to the fold and permitted

to publish because his novels and short stories are saturated with a passionate hatred of the old prewar Hungary. His historical novel, a monumental romantic-religious epic, entitled *The Burning Bush*, which is concerned with the relations between leaders and masses, was also published in 1958.

Most of the new writing was neither socialist-realist nor representative of the Communist viewpoint; much of it was, in fact, surrealist, grotesque and involved with applying depth psychology to human experience. None of that satisfied the Communists, but they had successfully breached the 'conspiracy of silence' and even the Populists were beginning to publish; it was a breach they hoped to broaden.

The most interesting literary controversy in the Communist world in 1958 came from an unexpected place—Bulgaria—and took the form of silence and rebellion. It had begun in December 1957 at an extraordinary meeting of the Bulgarian Writers' Union, and its key figures were Emil Manov, Todor Genov, Lyuben Stanev, Stoyan Daskalov and Lyudmil Stoyanov, all except Stanev Party members. Their 'revolt' denied the Party the right to control and censor the arts, denounced socialist realism, and was also severely critical of Bulgarian life. The main outlet for this group's work had been the magazine *Plamuk*, founded by the Writers' Union in 1957, and the controversy centered on three works: Manov's novel, *An Inauthentic Case*, in which a good Communist is destroyed by Party puritanism and intrusion into his private life; Stanov's novel, *The Laskov Family*, which delineates the Laskov father and son as Communists who see and use the Party as a means of self-aggrandizement; and Genov's play, *Fear*, concerned chiefly with a once idealistic Communist who has been corrupted by power.

The Party cultural commissars attacked the authors, the works, and Bulgarian writers in general, accusing them of approving the political and economic changes in Poland, approving the Hungarian revolt and of criticizing Soviet intervention in Hungary. They were also castigated for viewing forcible farm collectivization critically. Six of the dissident writers were dropped from the *Plamuk* masthead in December, but the writers refused to recant. Such refusal was, of course, looked on as part of the 'conspiracy of silence' and the Party spoke out: 'The irreconcilable ones may use persistent silence as a form of controversy.'

In April 1958, at the Writers' Union Conference, Party leader Todor Zhivkov warned 'that on the ideological front there is no room for compromises', and writers were told that there was 'an increasing number of poems, short stories, novels and plays in which our reality is reflected in an incorrect and distorted way, works in which instead of inspiring faith in the socialist cause . . . arouse in the reader's soul, to put it mildly, a hesitant attitude toward socialism, toward the Party, and toward its representatives.' Moreover, 'views are propounded which, in essence, are directed against Party policy in literature.'

Manov and his novel received the bulk of the censure. Manov had struck the Communists where it hurt most: in the solar plexus of the Party, its people and its role in the society. The Party critics were quick to take umbrage and to point out:

Has the author shown that our Party displays unlimited solicitude for the improvement of living conditions and the development of the individual and the entire people?

Nothing of this is in the novel. One senses in it clearly an implied protest . . . against the fact that the spiritual troubles of individual Communists remain misunderstood, and that, in our conditions, nobody looks deeper into the personal drama of man in order to

understand and help him. *It looks as if the reasons for the moral catastrophes of individuals must be sought in the social and public institutions, in the Party, and in the socialist community . . .* (italics added).

This was anathema: what Manov was saying was that the fabric of socialist life *produced* moral catastrophe as well as refused to deal with it in individuals, and for Marxists, this was the worst possible criticism and explains why the attack on him and on *An Inauthentic Case* was so severe.

But Manov refused to take the criticism lying down; instead, he fought back, insisting: 'Let us not forget that sometimes man is more important than the institution, that man is the high goal for which our society is struggling. Let us not separate the theory of our humanism from our own practice, even in individual cases.' But unfortunately that humanism was not available in practice even for his own individual case, and after the December 1957 and April 1958 Writers' Union meetings, Zhivkov replaced all of the dissidents on the Union's Presidium.

In Poland, there was an increasing harshness toward writers; the old coercion was by no means reinvoked, though many writers were put under increasing pressure as part of a general Communist Party 'verification campaign' or purge. Regime spokesmen warned that publication would be withheld from dissenting writers, but others insisted that 'Literature intended only to "cheer our hearts" has always been full of lies and alien to the people.' Almost as if in corroboration of this statement, dissenting writer Marek Hlasko, the stormy petrel of Polish letters, won the Polish Book Publishers' Association's annual award for his collection of short stories, *First Step in the Clouds*, in spite of being attacked by the orthodox and in the Soviet

press. The *Nowa Kultura* literary award also went to poet Aleksander Wat, who had spent a couple of postwar years in Communist prisons. But when Hlasko went abroad and in Paris published two stories, 'Cemeteries' and 'Next for Paradise', in the Polish emigré magazine, *Kultura*, he was violently attacked by the leading Party paper, *Trybuna Ludu*, and was censured for 'nihilism', imitating 'black literature', and of being under the influence of that 'classic master of contemporary anti-Communist libel', George Orwell. The *Przeglad Kulturalny* literary prize went to Slawomir Mrozek for a book of grotesque and vicious satires called *The Elephant*, and so it seemed that those who were 'negative' about Polish reality were being rewarded, for Mrozek and Hlasko painted a picture of despair, poverty, corruption, bureaucracy and stupidity. One interesting phenomenon was an Orwellian play called *Police* written by Slawomir Mrozek and published in *Dialog*. The drama is a satire on a totalitarian state where all prisoners have disappeared and which necessitates the elimination of all police, prisons and other paraphernalia of social punishment, unless one, at least one, prisoner can be found. The prisoner is found, recruited from the police itself, an *agent-provocateur*, and when he has properly defamed 'the Infant and His Uncle The Regent', the entire system can continue. Although the play is savagely satirical of 'brainwashing' and 'conformity' in a police state, it was nonetheless published and widely discussed. A delegation of Soviet writers visiting Poland in October 1958 stated that 'contemporary Polish literature depicted everything in black colors'.

In December 1958, a Writers' Union Congress was held where top regime functionaries warned the writers concerning their hostile attitudes towards present conditions of life in Poland; they also pointed out that unless voluntary cooperation

in conforming to regime cultural policy was not forthcoming, 'administrative measures' (i.e., coercion) would be applied. The Polish writers resisted strongly and vocally, and the conflict was sharpest on the issue of Party censorship, but the Party would not retreat: it insisted that it was not obliged to publish anything written by anyone and warned that 'some of the writers, after fourteen years of the people's rule, are still unable to find their place . . . in the work of laying the foundations of the new system.' The writers nonetheless passed a resolution condemning censorship on December 14, a resolution presumably authored by some of Poland's leading literary lights—Jan Kott, Paweł Hertz, Adam Ważyk, Mieczysław Jastrun and the Union's head, Antoni Słonimski. After this National Congress in Wrocław the Central Committee of the Party presumably published a letter censuring these writers, but neither the censure nor the resolution were published in the Polish press.

There was never much 'thaw' in Romania, and what there was resulted in socialist realism being 'ignored' or 'bypassed' rather than opposed. With the stiffening of policy in 1958, the regime launched a campaign to liquidate the Romanian writers' favorite 'by-pass method,' planned withdrawal, historical novels on 'minor, non-political and eternal themes,' and 'contemplative, mystical and evasionist' writing. A new literary bi-monthly, *Luceafărul*, dedicated to publishing contemporary, socialist-realist literature was inaugurated; its purpose was to contend with the passivity, apathy and escapism of Romanian letters.

Czechoslovak prose and poetry seemed to be reacting to a delayed de-Stalinization in accordance with the concepts proclaimed at the stormy Writers' Congress of April 1956. In 1957 a few 'liberal' poems appeared and in 1958, in spite of the very

rigid political temper of the country, surprisingly 'liberal' books were being published. Also, a kind of 'underground art society' sprang up composed of small groups meeting to discuss, comment on and exchange their own work, as well as to debate the problems of contemporary art. A group of young, 'neo-realist' poets created a school called *Everyday Poetry* which was concerned with the common man, the anonymous individual in the impersonal machine of the bureaucracy (shades of Hasek and Kafka!). These writers insisted—as one Czech critic described it—that one 'demands the rights of personal experience and the necessity of personal cognition; one . . . wants to see how a stone falls to the ground, not just know what Aristotle thought on the subject.' But the major Party paper, *Rude Pravo*, pointedly rejoined that in this new tendency, 'The common man enters . . . as a social outcast, as an individual forgotten by society, burdened with his private grief and worries, full of feelings of injustice and humiliation.' The Communists were wary of spanking the young writers too hard, for in their desire to produce more writing, they especially needed the up and coming authors, and *Literarni Noviny* in a New Year's editorial cautioned: ' . . . no one has yet had a serious word with our youth face-to-face, or has held up a mirror for them to make them see that their anti-official opposition is a dim reflection of the generation's fight of yesteryear.'

The younger generation dominated Czechoslovak letters in 1958, as did non-Communist writers, and particularly the 'Everyday' group, which professed a philosophical dis-engagement, a refusal to take part in the ideological struggle. Their humanism, though it appeared to be socialist and 'progressive,' was in fact a criticism of the Communist order. For example, the best poem of 1958, Frantisek Hrubin's *Metamorphosis*, deals with the human soul's eternal thirst for reaching the heavens

(symbolised in the flight of Icarus), simultaneously combined with a vision of nuclear holocaust. Hruba's poem won the State Prize (though he led the writers' rebellion at the 1956 Congress), and there was an increasing appearance of this apocalyptic motif, a sort of 'political neutralism' applying equally savagely to East and West.

Several good prose works appeared during the year. Valenta's *Follow the Green Light*, Hruba's *At the Table*, Arnost Lustig's *Night and Hope* and *Diamonds in the Night*, and Josef Skvorecky's *The Cowards*. All of these avoided present-day polemics by dealing chiefly with war-time themes or childhood reminiscences, and were a new type of novel stylistically, fast-paced in narrative, crisp in dialogue and with other clearly Western innovations in technique.

The work most attacked was *The Cowards*, a kind of Czech 'beat generation' novel, giving a rather cynical account of Communist life and much in the Hlasko tradition. The novel deals with eight days toward the end of World War II, when Prague organized its anti-Nazi uprising, and shows a group of teen-agers laughing at their patriotic elders, cynical about 'big ideas,' and interested chiefly in Western jazz music. Although they fight on the side of the Russians against the Nazis, as soon as the fighting is over, they disengage themselves and return to their jazz and to their beat-generation philosophizing.

This kind of work, of course, made continuing fulminations about socialist realism necessary in the country, and when one writer, Jan Trefulka, commented: '... no other branch of human activity can replace literature in rendering a critical picture of the national character, and in tracing the moral lineaments of modern Czech man,' the Communist Party paper quickly rapped his knuckles, and reminded him that this task was 'already being done by the Communist Party'.

In spite of the increasing rigidity of area-wide cultural policy, one curious phenomenon persisted, except in Bulgaria and Romania; there was a broadening flow of translations of Western writing. In spite of Western 'cultural decadence'—that sure sign of the imminent collapse of Western civilization—there was a marked rise in the stocks of Western writing, particularly in Poland and Hungary. In Poland, for instance, the favorite foreign books were Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Faulkner's *The Wild Palms* and Thornton Wilder's *The Ides of March*, with Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* bringing up a poor fourth. There was a veritable river of translation, with works appearing by Camus, Faulkner, Thomas Mann, Hemingway, Simenon, Caldwell, A. E. Coppard, Roger Martin du Gard, Thornton Wilder, Evelyn Waugh, Steinbeck, Proust, Sartre, Beckett, Sagan, Duerrenmatt, Frans Werfel, Claudel, Thomas Wolfe, Colette, and a host of others.

These translations may provide a leaven of other viewpoints and values which in the long run (and it will be a *very* long run) will change both Communist literature and life, for in this regard, surely, Milton's words in the *Areopagitica* are still true: 'Books . . . do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy, and extraction of that living intellect that bred them.'

It is difficult for us, here in the West, to appreciate the writers' dilemma in the Communist world. In the main, writers have displayed extraordinary courage and integrity in a place and at a time when both can prove and have proved disastrous to them. They have adhered to a kind of 'socialist humanism' which, in its passionate concern for individuals, for justice, for goodness, has been the most trenchant and profound criticism of Communism, and they have been *engagé* in the battle, politi-

cally and literarily, with an intensity and commitment presently rare in their counterparts in the Western literary world.

But one must not expect or ask too much of them. Many have behaved well, and others badly, but the totalitarian state can and does bring enormous pressures to bear on writers to conform to its political exigencies, and in the struggle both for and against those exigencies, the writers have paid a price: their greatest energies and talents have been used, so that far less has gone into creation of more enduring work than might have, or else, and in addition, the tyranny which circumvents their birth has also prevented works from being taken out of desk drawers and offered for a publication which writers know would be denied.

#### *Acknowledgment*

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## V. VOICES FROM THE SOUTH

### YOUNGER POETS OF AUSTRALIA

R. A. Simpson

■

IN presenting these poets from Australia I feel that it is most important to mention first that they are not meant to represent any group or any sudden new development in Australian poetry. Some have ideas in common, but I am certain the main differences will be apparent to most readers.

Over the past twenty to thirty years the development of Australian poetry has been very rapid. New evaluations have taken place, especially in terms of the 'bush' tradition of Australian writing which is settling down into a much less important position. Poets of obvious quality have arisen . . . such as A. D. Hope, Judith Wright, Kenneth Slessor and James McAuley, and these have generally had a strong influence on the poets of the present. It is interesting to note that a poet such as Christopher Brennan (1870—1932) is now coming into his own, though it has taken forty-eight years for one of his most important poems, 'The Wanderer', to be reprinted in its entirety.

The younger Australian poets generally feel that they can write about anything and any place; provincialism is dying fast. It may seem odd to readers in England and America to have to say this, but the demand for regional uniqueness has been a strong and oppressive influence on Australian writers. The best of the younger writers feel that good poetry is more than mere description and the ability to make a good jingle; as Vincent

Buckley has written, they 'are less concerned with striking attitudes than with finding out deepest truths about themselves and their destinies.'

The poets represented in this little anthology need a wider audience than the one they have at the moment. They will, I am sure, be unfamiliar to most overseas readers, though an anthology has recently appeared in which two of the poets, Francis Webb and Vincent Buckley, made very brief appearances. I hope this collection will help to give overseas readers a more complete picture of what some of the younger generation are really doing.

### *CHARLES HIGHAM*

#### *STILL LIVES*

A fish, a tangled net, a pear;  
A half-cut loaf upon the board.  
Your mind, or someone's, lighting there,  
Might think their quiet hatched a lair,  
Might try to probe it with a word.

He, the mongrel painter, purged  
The darkness from the fishing-net  
And all the common things he'd urged  
Out of the dark where something surged  
Calcined them all of his regret.

Salvaged them from the October hour  
Despite the critical clock that strove  
With passionless hands to slow the dour  
Noon in the basement where his power  
Grew out and outward like a grove.

And she, his usual subject, lay  
 Contemptuously near at hand,  
 Loathing the shabby hands at play,  
 With brush and brush till end of day,  
 The canvas naked on its stand.

The cat inked out the azure rug,  
 The window rattled in the breeze;  
 Outside, a bench where they could hug  
 When he was loosened from the tug,  
 Melpomene's disastrous fees.

Outside, a birch tree young and white.  
 Inside, the four consuming walls.  
 And she agaze at all his might  
 Slipping away within her sight,  
 The sexless passion which appals.

She almost rose to dash it down—  
 The easel where he stood and limned,  
 But changed her mind and slept alone,  
 Dreaming she tore him to the bone  
 While the evening candle dimmed.

Might try to probe it with a word?  
 Might think their quiet hatched a lair?  
 Your mind, or someone's, lighting there,  
 Saw just one loaf upon the board,  
 One fish, one tangled net, one pear.

*FRANCIS WEBB*

### HOSPITAL NIGHT

Years, and patience, and simple pain may leaven  
 Dry noncommittal plaster while the Cross hails heaven;  
 But the cry to the Father has accomplished nothing at all.

Before this hour's child old prophecy shakes his head.  
Someone murmurs a little, dithers in bed:  
Against that frail call  
Are imminent the siege-works of a huge nightfall.

Trees, drawn up, rustle in the steep time of gloaming;  
Crude green gathers itself to a darkness, dreaming  
Of perished ice-world summers, of birds unwieldy and tame.  
Darkness is astir, pondering, touching  
Kinship with the first Dark in a trunk's crouching.  
Darkness lays claim  
To the plight of an age, limbs and travail and name.

Someone calls again in his sleep, and my thought is pain,  
Pain, till chanticleer will carol truce again  
To the faceless joustings of green and green by an old cell,  
With time roundabout, and labouring shapes of sin;  
To the knotted fists of lightning, or tilting rain;  
To the wind's lapse and swell  
—Old diehards of whom the birds shiver to tell.

They have taken down the day's wasted extended light  
But now a star is uttered in the long night,  
Pitched beyond cabals of storm and freebooting tree.  
For these, isled upon centuries, are murmuring, murmuring ever  
Of good or evil becoming a darkness; but never  
Darkens this free  
And ruminant glitter of star and memory.

It is timeless, the star. It is you, my father, beloved friend,  
Come to me in the guile and darkness of a day's end,  
As a lonely intense blue burning, near nor far.  
The stone is rolled up: too early yet to say  
Whether a darkness is decision or rises the day;  
But out of war  
I labour, breathing deeply, and wander towards your star.

*VINCENT BUCKLEY*  
TO BRIGID IN SUSSEX

When I think of you first, it is not a real presence  
But a largeness of gesture, as when the dawn whitens  
Our flat horizon, magnifying our hills  
Till they seem almost a retreat of mountains:  
A vagueness the clouds have in a floating sunset  
Drifting their shadows on your small face,  
On your heart expressed in a shiver of rose-colour.

So the remembering shifts, and comes to bear  
On your very self, on the felt inward thing.  
By a green distracted sea your large eyes wait  
Behind the grew glasses with their pink faint rims,  
And your hands perhaps panic, grasping your beret on  
In the high wind that ravels your mother's skirt.

And I wait too, feeling, unseasonably,  
Self-eaten, tired almost to despair.  
The wind glows here too, but tinctured by mist.  
The sky is immense, but the stone measures it  
To lives taken in self-pity or in work:  
Or am I judging merely the space between us?

Paused, so, for a moment in this gap of stone,  
I reach for the live waiting that's your face,  
And grasp only eyes or hands or a flooding of colour.  
Will the space I dread carry my striving to you?  
Or shall I, after this labour of recognition,  
Find myself only a mirror polishing stone,  
Or a man's ghost staring in a silent road?

*NOEL MACAINSH*

## WILLIAM BLAKE IN AUSTRALIA

This broad-hewn valley would have suited Blake;  
 The ranks of God on every hillside, still  
 And waiting. He'd have pondered on these lakes  
 Of shade cast from the angels slowly moving  
 Along the slopes, those tribes assembled. Full  
 And spiking now, that nimbus from the crown  
 Elevated to the east he would have been  
 Delighted at, as seeing in that splendour  
 The radiance of Uriel or the grave,  
 Immense Albion, a world's enormous glory  
 Whose gaze would dazzle flesh and fuse the soul  
 To sing for evermore in heaven's choir.  
 His friend too, Samuel Palmer, would have shown  
 How here, the trees can figure holy things  
 To denser sight; and how the Prince of Glory  
 Hung there upon His bough, the grief and dolour  
 Of all His streaming hair, was bodied forth  
 As only sad and sun-graced mistletoe.  
 For from these trees, they would have marvelled, seeing  
 Wheeling within the hoary air, the seraphs  
 And the nimble cherubim all now piping  
 Their bird-sweet hosannahs over an axeman  
 Bending his way, held in a nimb of Glory.

*EVAN JONES*

## INVICTUS

Being too often lonely as a child,  
 He clearly saw the way in which the strands  
 Which should be patterned into love were piled  
 Tangled and torn in corners; and his hands,

Not occupied with other children's games,  
 Distraughtly flew among them; as he grew

He learned the ways of love and its soft names  
And wove all that he learned into his view.

But could not see the final treachery  
Which waited to betray his thudding heart,  
And as the end of all his weaving he  
Became, as was determined at the start,

Netted within the arteries of love  
So closely that he could no longer see  
And tore them every time he tried to move;  
And in blind panic struggled to be free.

Alone, and cursed and blessed by the libation  
Of these sweet vessels, he stood still, his one  
Desire to spend himself in lamentation;  
But guilt and love-bred habit drove him on.

*CHRIS WALLACE-CRABBE*

### THE FATE OF DESDEMONA

Supposing that Iago's limbs had lain  
With Desdemona, taking from her flesh  
Revenge for his environment and youth  
And pleasuring in her midnight pain,  
How could Othello ascertain the truth?

Suppose that Desdemona in the sheets  
Had curved her mouth in pain, but known the heart  
Stir exultation underneath her breast,  
Because Iago, spurning feats  
Of bravery, could yet devote the best

Part of his life to hatred and to love,  
Whereas Othello in his lonely pride  
Could only yield erotic words and limbs;  
And could the playwright only move  
Out from his preconceptions and his whims

To see Othello as a tragic tower  
 That rose above the spinning world alone—  
 The irrevocably separated man—  
 So that his famed and vaunted power  
 Could light the tragic routine that began

When Adam reached out for the yielding hand  
 To learn of absence for the first cold time  
 And strode the circuit of his loneliness  
 Until her calm return, the land  
 Taunting his solitude, his small address:

Then might not tragedy achieve its goal,  
 Showing the final passion of the soul?

*ALEXANDER CRAIG*

AUBADE

At sunrise, slatted imprints through  
 The pattern of the window-blind,  
 Horizontal on the door-page, draw  
 My half-awakened eyes to find

A message, as I turn in bed,  
 Scrawled large upon each shaded line—  
 Whose meaning still I cannot read  
 But sense where light and shadow join.

Such I must know for what they are,  
 Insignia of the sun and night,  
 Emblems yet nothing singular,  
 Being no symbolic script they write.

I dress. Full day asserts distinctions:  
 Bed, window, blind and wooden door,  
 Each shows now in its proper function.  
 I dress my fears in metaphor:

A dark skein cuts across my days.  
 Birth's endless spool unwound it; death  
 Tugs at the other end—or ties  
 A sudden noose to stop my breath.

O filament that fires the sky  
 And fibre of my being's core,  
 These mortal steps, for one more day,  
 As on a tightrope tread my floor.

*R. A. SIMPSON*

THE DRUNKEN SCULPTOR

Claimed by the earth this sprawling man would rise  
 And so create above a giddy lawn  
 An image in the night before he dies;  
 He knows that this is how all art is born.

The moon—the faceless blinking of the stars  
 Seem waiting life, and they must wait the same  
 Till he can make them symbols of his wars  
 By rising from this vertigo of time.

Though men create, creation needs a god  
 Who finds and draws an image from his will,  
 And from the noble drunkenness of blood.  
 He lies upon the lawn and ponders still;

This god leans back for he can carve all stone,  
 All wood—give marble eyes and fragile speech—  
 Without the hindrance of his flesh and bone:  
 The stars are small, the moon is out of reach,

But sense distorts what could be held and carved  
 And claimed as sober emblems of their time!  
 He nods, decides that moon must be reserved  
 For him though with his hands he cannot climb

A concave steep with cloud. His face begins  
To die with sleep and blend with stars and night  
As resurrection comes; a new moon grins  
Unconsciously from all its drunken height.

## VI. TEST CASES

### ‘DOCTOR ZHIVAGO’ and ‘LOLITA’

Marc Slonim

#### 1

After years of insignificance or official dullness the Russians have lately made a brilliant comeback into World literature. Two of them, Pasternak and Nabokov, have been dominating the literary scene in Europe and America since 1958. Their success, however, was of a very particular kind: the original text of *Doctor Zhivago* could not appear in Pasternak's native land for political reasons, and his novel became available abroad only in translations—most of them rather inadequate; while Nabokov's *Lolita*, written in English and never published in the author's native tongue, became a best seller in the United States after charges of pornography were levelled against it, and it still awaits the lifting of moral or legal bans in other countries. In short, the two Russians, though each on an entirely different level and for completely different reasons, provoked international scandals.

In the spring of 1959 Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, the Italian publisher who controls the world copyright of *Doctor Zhivago*, told New York journalists that the novel had sold three million copies in the chief European languages. In the United States alone its circulation went over the 800,000 mark. It is difficult to say to what extent this tremendous popularity was due to the extraordinary circumstances of the Nobel prize award, first joyfully accepted and then hastily rejected by Pasternak under the pressure of communist indignation and a short but extremely

violent campaign in the Moscow press. In any case Pasternak, the man of the news, the target of all foreign correspondents and photographers in Russia, figured so frequently in the headlines of dailies and weeklies, that thousands bought his book in obedience to the herd instinct, with no intention of reading it, while other thousands opened it in the hope of finding some sensational attacks on the Soviet regime. They remained disappointed—but so were many others who tried to read *Doctor Zhivago* as a 'great book' and became puzzled or confused. The critics, on the whole, praised the novel very highly. In Italy where the first version of *Doctor Zhivago* was published in October 1957, long before the commotion caused by the Nobel prize, it became a literary event, and quite a few prominent Italian poets and novelists called it 'the turning point in contemporary European letters'. In England, France and America, despite a variety of critical verdicts, the book was proclaimed 'the most significant work of our times', and the debate about its impact stirred a great many people and went beyond the restricted circles of literary pundits. This genuine interest in the novel, however, did not prevent some critics as well as many average readers from making two mistakes: they compared it with well known Russian classics like *War and Peace*, and they judged it according to the standards of the traditional novel.

*Doctor Zhivago* encompasses some thirty years of Russian life in the twentieth century; its sixty characters are taken from all walks of Russian society, and it does contain a description of events prior to and after the 1917 revolution. This vast range of the book and the large sweep of its historical panorama helped create the illusion that we have an epic in the Tolstoyan manner. In fact, Tolstoy's narrative has the unhurried movement of a chronological exposition; its aim is a full and realistic presentation of events, objects and characters, and the latter are

treated in depth, with that completeness which makes Tolstoy's psychological realism so powerful. On the other hand, Pasternak's novel about Yuri Zhivago, a Russian intellectual who passes through a happy childhood in the Empire of the Tsars and becomes later a victim of the revolutionary upheaval, is a fragmentary composition, totally alien to the river-like quality of a *War and Peace*. The novel is divided into seventeen parts, each part containing some twenty to fifty sections, and instead of a narrative sequence which unfolds the story in its temporal and causal unity, we have flashes, separate scenes, isolated evocations. And the 'rounded' presentation of life-size characters is replaced by symbolic images. Unprepared readers or over-prepared critics seem baffled by those images which, to use the language of book reviews, lack 'flesh and blood'. Even the main protagonist of the novel, Yuri Zhivago himself, is shown much more as a thinking personality than as a fictional hero. The whole focus of the narrative is neither on the rendering of events nor on a psychological analysis of characters. Unlike the majority of European novels after Proust and Joyce, *Doctor Zhivago* relegates the study of mental processes and the explanation of psychological motivation to a remote background. One is tempted to say that it forms a reaction against the psychological preoccupations of our era. Pasternak is much more interested in the symbolic and poetic unity of his novel and breaks away from the well-structured 'flowing narrative'. He creates his own highly subjective form, and he merges dramatic and lyrical elements in a style that combines emotional intensity, philosophical complexity and verbal simplicity—the latter often contrasting the allusive and elusive quality of images and scenes.

Except for a beautiful love affair between Yuri and Lara—one of the most romantic descriptions of passion in modern

literature, there is hardly any plot in *Doctor Zhivago*. The dynamics of action in the story either coincide with those of historical events which toss the protagonists about as if they were the playthings of waves after a shipwreck, or are developed from the forces of destiny—one of Pasternak's main concepts. To him a novel is a fictional composition which conveys the sense of the interdependence of human destinies, and he stresses this point which reverses the flatness and superficiality of academic definitions of the *genre*. In his early prose (*The Safe Conduct*, written in the thirties) Pasternak said that, 'focused on a reality which feeling has displaced, art is a record of this displacement'. The poet throws a beam of light on a selected area, and his work is determined by the intensity, the direction and the angle of the beam which produces the displacement or transfiguration of reality. *Doctor Zhivago* is composed according to this aesthetic credo, and it must be evaluated not as a realistic chronicle or a psychological epic aiming at a comprehensive picture of a historical period, but as an attempt to convey a vision of life and history interpreted through personal experience and subjective philosophy. Therefore *Doctor Zhivago* fails to fulfill expectations created by familiarity with the models of nineteenth and twentieth century realistic and psychological novels. Critics who still persist in measuring it with improper yardsticks are unable to explain why this work, studded with the most obvious errors, holds our attention and possesses such a mysterious moving force. They also fail to understand that one of the great attractions of *Doctor Zhivago* lies in what it leaves to the reader's imagination: Pasternak does not explain why Lara's husband left her, he does not offer us love scenes in order to convince us of Yuri's passion for the young woman, and he deliberately leaves out the usual chain of causality in depicting the actions of his heroes. I would even

say that he replaces the logical or psychological determinism of the modern novel by a method of coincidences, which simply horrified the guardians of good manners in literature. The encounters of many characters in the book are purely accidental; people appear and disappear to emerge later for no obvious reason, and at first glance, the author takes a malicious delight in this puzzling disorder. Basically, however, Pasternak follows a pattern: he opposes the closed Euclidian world of geometrical structures with an open universe of will and chance. According to him (and to *Yuri Zhivago*) the human condition is subject to change and coincidence; the design of fate is arbitrary and unexpected. The reader must accept this as a central law of Pasternak's universe.

This universe is lit up by Pasternak's poetic preferences and attitudes without going into an analysis of the whole system of symbols which prevail in the book—and it is an involved system, combining idealistic philosophy of German origin with numerous references to Christianity—one can say that its leitmotif is pantheistic. Not only is man depicted in constant communion with nature and viewed as an organic part of the universe, but objects and natural phenomena are humanised and animated. We are far away from Tolstoyan biologism which looked at life as a simple, regular process of birth, growth and annihilation. Pasternak has an intense cosmic or oceanic feeling, and his descriptions of nature—which occupy many beautiful pages of the book—do not serve as mere background: they are necessary parts of a whole which encompasses Russia, its land and people, the revolution with its elation, blood and destruction, and individuals, like *Yuri* and his wife, or *Lara* and her husband, and which accomplishes a fusion of matter and spirit. This singleness of flesh and soul, of environment and human drives can be sensed only as an order of interdependence. Every-

thing is therefore tied in one knot: fate and love, memory, and objects, history and death.

In this total vision Pasternak affirms the priority of life over dogma and opposes all social, political or religious theories which sacrifice concreteness and joy of being to schemes of rationality and formulas. This book, filled with murder, ravages of war, violence of rebellion, starvation and strife, irradiates such an exaltation of being, such a belief in the basic worth and thrill of life—and this without a trace of naiveté or Pangloss-like optimism—that it ultimately overcomes the despair and horror of some of its descriptions. Not unlike Greek tragedy, it conveys an acceptance of a universal harmony. Since Yuri Zhivago and his friends often speak of Christianity and see in its introduction the beginning of man's march toward freedom, there is a temptation to attach a mystical or an outright religious meaning to Pasternak's concept of harmony. There is no doubt that he uses a number of religious symbols and images—particularly those of communion, death and resurrection as expressed in ecclesiastic ritual and liturgy. Yet Pasternak's Christianity is far from being dogmatic or denominational. For him Jesus Christ is the symbol of sacrifice and suffering, and every man who is going through torment and pain is akin to Christ. Yuri Zhivago who has suffered so much during the revolution and finally meets a tragic death, is not a Christ-like figure, as some critics have intimated—but he naturally thinks of Christ and is deeply moved by His passion. The Gospel of Jesus is interpreted as moral teaching and not as Divine revelation. And the message of Christianity is presented as a revolutionary announcement of individual freedom and therefore as the beginning of modern history—and this despite all the distortions of the first Christian ideas by subsequent lawgivers and commentators. In a way Yuri Zhivago compares the origins of Christianity with

those of Communism. He hails the sweep and the daring of Lenin's first decrees, and sees in the ideas of brotherhood and internationalism proclaimed in 1917 the same spirit of liberation as that one finds in the Sermon on the Mount. But the noble aspirations of the Russian revolution are later drowned in violence and terror or twisted by bureaucrats and counterfeitors. As an individual Zhivago does not want to have anything to do with this deformation of high ideals. He tries to find a shelter from the 'draught of history', and refuses to play a part in the national drama. This refusal of commitment constitutes a crime in an epoch of obligatory social and political participation. Vainly swimming against the current, Zhivago is bound to perish—the victim of overwhelming forces. Yet until the bitter end he defends his right to live his existence as he plans and wills it. A physician, he is also a philosopher and a poet, and he firmly believes that the only immortality of man is his deed and his creation. To write poetry seems to him as important as to reform humanity or to rebuild a country, and a thin collection of his poems is the only trace of his passage on earth. His notes and conversations on art are one of the most revealing and profound parts of a book which, in general, is extremely rich in intellectual brilliancy and originality.

With his usual disregard for the accepted rules of the literary game, Pasternak concludes his book with twenty five poems by Yuri Zhivago. The existing English translations fail completely to give even an approximate idea of this most important section of the book. In the Russian original the poems are beautiful and moving in their musical perfection and in their symbolic imagery. Some of them, particularly those on Mary Magdalene or the last days of Christ, have a rare dramatic intensity and a singular fervor. All these resonant and intimate stanzas of love, nature and passion summarise the main themes

of *Doctor Zhivago* and cast a new light on the whole novel. The non-Russian reader, unfortunately, is inclined to regard them as an appendix or an author's whim—and he can believe in their beauty and significance only by an act of faith. There is no doubt that *Doctor Zhivago* is the most important work of fiction to have come from Russia during the last thirty years. However, one does not need to employ these relative terms to call it a great book. Of course, professors and professional critics (and I myself belong to both these breeds) are usually reluctant to admit that a truly outstanding work of art has been born during their lifetime. They do not like to commit themselves on living writers, and much prefer the dead ones, those who are safely classified. But even the most cautious among them will be compelled to recognise that *Doctor Zhivago*, despite its ambiguous status of international best seller, is a novel of the same magnitude as *The Magic Mountain* or *The Counterfeiters* or *Swann's Way*. It is certainly one of the most important and representative novels of our century.

Pasternak was acclaimed as the greatest of Russia's living poets long before he started composing *Doctor Zhivago*. Like most of his friends—symbolists and futurists of the twenties—he remained in Russia, and despite the fact that his poems were declared 'not attuned to the Revolutionary era' and their author was reproached for being 'aloof politically', he resisted all attempts to make him change his position of poetic and intellectual independence. His poems were dubbed esoteric, individualistic, decadent and formalistic. While connoisseurs admired the boldness of his imagery, his extraordinary similes ('the surf bakes waves like waffles') and his indomitable spirit, communist authorities curtailed his production. By 1933 he was reduced to making translations, and he did an admirable job: his versions of Shakespeare, of Goethe's *Faust* and of other

French, German and English poets are incredible feats of craft and poetic genius. From 1932 to 1959, only two thin collections of his poems were permitted to be published in a limited number of copies. Yet in these twenty-seven years his fame in Russia and abroad continued to grow, and even today when he is under official attacks and is called 'the enemy of the people' because of the foreign editions of *Doctor Zhivago*, the youth in Russia look upon him as one of the best representatives of national letters. He is admired, however, by a fairly restricted group of writers and qualified readers. His situation in the Soviet society is rather precarious, and he is isolated from its main stream. His adversaries call him 'an inner emigré'. His defenders, on the contrary, find in his work the expression of that very spirit of truth and faith which was for centuries the mark of Russian creative art.

## 2

Vladimir Nabokov, the writer whom some critics—quite erroneously—describe as Pasternak's counterpart, has been an emigré for some forty years. He won recognition among his compatriots abroad as the author of novels, stories and poems in Russian. While living in Berlin and Paris (before World War II) and then in America, Nabokov published a series of novels under the pen name of Sirin. In his native tongue he displayed the same verbal brilliancy verging on preciousness and snobbery which appeared later in his fictional work in English. Although he had started in the traditional realistic vein, his work soon acquired the character of grim fantasy and morbidity, and some years ago I called him one of Russia's belated surrealists, and pointed out his link with Gogol, Dostoevsky (whom he dislikes intensely) and Kafka. His *Real Life Of Sebastian Knight*, *Bend Sinister*, *Conclusive Evidence*, *Pnin*,

as well as his pungent short stories in *The New Yorker*, gave him an honorable place in American letters; but he attained real fame with *Lolita*. Written in 1955 and rejected by almost every big publisher in America as an 'erotic risk', this controversial novel was first published in Paris by the Olympia Press, which specializes in a very particular kind of book for 'amateurs', later made its way into some avant-garde magazines in New York, and finally saw the light in America in 1958—to become immediately a best seller. Some provincial libraries banned it and dragons of virtue denounced it as an offence to public morals. In fact the plot of *Lolita* could easily excite the imagination of mature gentlemen and lonely ladies. It depicted a clinical case—that of a half Swiss, half English intellectual whose early traumatic experience—an unsatisfied love for a child—generates a passion for little girls, or 'nymphets' as he calls them. In America he meets Lolita, the perfect 'nymphet', and marries her mother to get closer to his beloved. When his wife is killed in an automobile accident, he makes the twelve years old girl his mistress, and feigning a father-daughter relationship, travels with her across the States.

The novel is presented as the hero's confessions written in prison while he is awaiting trial for the murder of a debauched writer who had taken Lolita away from him. The confessions are published after his death by a priggish scholar, a Ph. D. who claims, quite justly, in his preface that the book does not contain a single unprintable word. The preface is the key to the whole work: it is a brilliant parody of hypocrisy, of pseudo-scientific fakery, of American love for statistics, slogans and literary or moral 'messages'. It sets the tone of irony and sarcasm maintained throughout the narrative.

Although pathological aberration forms the kernel of the story, it has but a few passages which fall into the category of

erotic descriptions. This book is not a study in perversion and sex; its main themes—pursued on two levels—deal with the nature of love and with a critique of American civilisation. The exploration of love evokes Poe with his child-wife and with his precision in portraying madness and nightmare. It also reminds one of Baudelaire's sublimation of sensual morbidity into mystical revelation or a high manifestation of the irrational. Humbert, the hero of *Lolita*, is mesmerised by his erotic fury, but passion is always mania, obsession, madness. It is not so much the strange object of his carnal desire that is important. Nabokov seems to emphasise the need of man to transgress the boundaries of a well ordered and policed world of mechanized pleasure and prescribed fun—and the leap into the monstrous and pathological comes from the same dark regions of the human psyche as the flight into art. Creativity and disease are twins. Like other protagonists of Sirin-Nabokov, his Humbert is tempted by the 'not permissible'; he breaks the law to affirm his own fancy and to pass from the compulsion of necessity into the realm of freedom. While Nabokov says quite a few sad and profound things about those dark roots of man's drives, he concentrates on that very pettiness and vulgarity from which the poets and the lunatics try to escape. Nabokov's biting, often fierce onslaught against the idols of the American way of life becomes a stylised grotesque, obviously inspired by Gogol and his gallery of mugs. Some descriptions in *Lolita* have the shrill and almost diabolical overtones of the Russian master. Nabokov laughs at the smooth facade of American middle class gentility which finds everything perfectly wonderful, at the routine of manners with their false pretense of scientific precision, at the cult of statistics, research projects and publicity, questionnaires and 'do it yourself' manuals. He hits at the monotony and dullness of hotels

and motels which encircle the vast continent, he derides the mixture of puritanism, freudianism, and shallowness which infects American colleges, and he debunks the big myths of a commercialized society of sellers, buyers, athletes and entertainers: the myth of youth which turns into perversion, the myth of optimism which refuses to face reality, and the myth of quantity which has drowned the idea of excellence in all areas of human endeavour. *Lolita* herself becomes a typical image of the American starlet—a mixture of external attractiveness and basic vulgarity, of sound rationality and senseless violence.

Many pages of the novel are undisguised parody. The last scene of *Lolita* where Humbert murders the decadent writer Quigly, the abductor and seducer of the 'nymphet', is a masterpiece of sarcasm, a grotesque and a parody of modern detective stories. In general Nabokov is far better in his evocation of 'gothic' horrors and in descriptions of what is low, vile and contemptible in man than in his portrayal of physical lust and sexual intoxication. Only censors and male and female members of 'anti-vice' societies could see something lewd in this half hallucinating, half satirical, sad and angry book.

What makes *Lolita* a quite remarkable achievement is its language, that art of a verbal juggler which makes Nabokov a first rate literary performer. His craft, his brilliancy, his incandescent images and similes, his dazzling vocabulary, the whole phonetic articulation and diction of his narrative, the devices and tricks he constantly uses—all this makes *Lolita* most amazing, amusing and exciting reading. We know a number of writers who reached literary heights in their second language: Joseph Conrad, Guillaume Apollinaire, Jean Moreas. But they did not write in Polish or in Greek. I do not know a single modern writer who writes with equal formal perfection

in two languages of which only one is his native tongue. The case of Nabokov is unique in contemporary letters. Not satisfied with the place he occupied among the Russian emigrés, he has now moved into American literature which must acknowledge him as one of its most brilliant novelists. *Lolita* may not be a great book—but it certainly is a most curious and symptomatic phenomenon of the international (or cosmopolitan) spirit of Western Society.

## VII. NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**DOMINIQUE ARBAN**: Russian born biographer and critic, living in France. Mme. Arban has made a special study of Dostoievsky and is the author of *Dostoievsky le Coupable* (Julliard, 1953). She is at present at work on a new stage adaptation of *The Brothers Karamazov* for the Pitoeffs.

**ROBERT BREUER**: American critic and musicologist.

**ALAN BROWNJOHN**: English poet. Co-editor of *Writing Today*.

**WILLIAM COOPER**: English novelist. Author of *Scenes from Provincial Life* (Macmillan, 1950) and, more recently, *Young People* (1958).

**PAUL ENGLE**: Oxford-educated American poet and novelist. Professor of English, and Director of Poetry Workshop, Iowa University. Visiting Professor, Louisiana State University.

**G. S. FRASER**: English poet and critic; recent works include *Vision and Rhetoric* (Faber & Faber) and *The Modern Writer and his World* (Deutsch). Lecturer in English at Leicester University.

**JEAN GARRIGUE**: American poet and novelist. Her book of poems, *The Monument Rose* was published by Noonday Press in 1953. She contributed to *Five Young American Poets*—3rd series (New Directions, 1944).

**ANTHONY HARTLEY**: Literary Editor of *The Guardian*.

**DANIEL HJORTH**: Co-editor of the Scandinavian literary magazine, *Bonniers Litterära Magasin*.

**CHARLES MILLER**: New England poet and novelist.

**ROY HARVEY PEARCE**: American critic and historian. Editor of *Colonial American Writing* (Rinehart, 1950).

**ABRAHAM ROTHBERG**: Editor-in-Chief of the *Free Europe Press* and frequent contributor to American literary magazines and anthologies.

**MARC SLONIM**: Is bi-lingual in Russian and English and Professor of Russian Literature at Sarah Lawrence College, New York. His works include: *The Epic of Russian Literature from its origins through Tolstoy* (Oxford, N.Y. 1950), *Modern Russian Literature from Chekhov to the Present* (Oxford, N.Y. 1953), *An Outline of Russian Literature* (Oxford, London, 1958) and *Three Loves of Dostoevsky* (John Redman, 1959).

**DAVID WAGONER**: American poet and novelist. His book of poems, *A Place to Stand* was published by Indiana in 1958 and in the same year, Viking published his novel, *Rock*.

## VIII. LITERARY AWARDS

### NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

1958

Boris Pasternak

(Not accepted)



### ENGLISH AWARDS

#### ARTS COUNCIL POETRY AWARD (1959)

Roy Fuller: *Brutus's Orchard* (Deutsch)

Thom Gunn: *The Sense of Movement* (Faber)

#### ASSOCIATED TELEVISION LIMITED PRIZE (1959)

Original Television Plays:

First: Arnold Yarrow: *The Tip-Off*

Second: Kevin Barry: *Cut in Ebony*

Casey Daniels: *Safe Conduct*

Special Prize: Gwenyth Jones: *Downbeat Story*

#### AUTHORS' CLUB AWARD (1959)

First Novel: Alan Sillitoe: *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*  
(W. H. Allen)

#### BLACKWELL PRIZE (Biennial, 1959)

English Essay: Meyrick H. Garré

#### BOOKS OF THE MONTH LITERARY COMPETITION (1959)

Henry Williams: *Living As I Do* (Oldbourne)

#### CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL POETRY COMPETITION (1959)

First : Laurence Whistler : 'The Spectacle'	} THE GUINNESS Second : Helen Spalding : 'Let Us Now Praise Prime Numbers'	} BOOK OF POETRY Third : William Younger : 'Change'	} (Putnam)
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#### CRIME WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AWARD (1959)

J. Symons: *The Colour of Murder* (Collins)

## DUFF COOPER MEMORIAL PRIZE (1958)

John Betjeman: *Collected Poems* (Murray)

## FOYLE PRIZE FOR POETRY (1959)

John Betjeman: *Collected Poems* (Murray)

## FREDERICK NIVEN LITERARY AWARD (Triennial, 1956)

Robin Jenkins: *The Cone Gatherers* (Macdonald)

## GREENWOOD PRIZE (1958)

One Poem: Mark Bourne: 'I Walked' (Poetry Review)

## GUINNESS POETRY AWARD (1958)

First: Ted Hughes: 'The Thought-Fox'

Second: Thomas Kinsella: 'Thinking of Mr. D.'

Third: David Wright: 'A Thanksgiving'

GUINNESS BOOK  
OF POETRY  
(Putnam)

## HAWTHORNDEN PRIZE (1958)

Dom Moraes: *A Beginning* (Parton)

## INTERNATIONAL FANTASY AWARD (1957)

J. R. R. Tolkein: *Lord of the Rings* (Allen & Unwin)

## JAMES TAIT BLACK MEMORIAL PRIZES (1959)

Biography: Joyce Hemlow: *The History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford)Fiction: Angus Wilson: *The Middle Age of Mrs. Eliot*

(Secker &amp; Warburg)

## JEWISH BOOK AWARD (1959)

H. J. Zimmels: *Ashkenazim and Sephardim* (Oxford)

## JOHN LLEWELYN RHYS MEMORIAL PRIZE (1959)

Dan Jacobson: *A Long Way from London* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson)

## ROSE MARY CRAWSHAY PRIZE

Mary Moorman: *William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Early Years, 1770-1803* (Clarendon Press)

## SOMERSET MAUGHAM TRUST FUND (1959)

Thom Gunn : *The Sense of Movement* (Faber)

## TOM-GALLON TRUST AWARD (Biennial, 1957)

E. W. Hildick : 'A Casual Visit' (Evening News)

## W. H. HEINEMANN FOUNDATION FOR LITERATURE (1959)

John Press : *The Chequer'd Shade* (Oxford)Hester Chapman : *The Last Tudor King* (Cape)

## AMERICAN AWARDS

## ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS

Fellowship : Louise Bogan

## ALEXANDER DROUTZKOY MEMORIAL AWARD (Poetry Society)

Robert Frost

## AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND LETTERS (1959)

Award of Merit for the novel

Aldous Huxley

## AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL AWARD

William F. & Elisabeth S. Friedman : *The Shakespeare Ciphers Examined*

## ATLANTIC PRIZE (1958)

George Paloczi-Horvath : *The Undefeated* (Atlantic)

## BETA SIGMA PHI PRIZE

First novel : John Marlyn : *Under Ribs of Death*

(McCelland and Stewart)

## BOLLINGEN PRIZE IN POETRY

e.e. cummings

## EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY MEMORIAL AWARD (Poetry Society)

Robert Penn Warren : *Promises* (Random)

## EMILY HAMBLEN AWARD (Poetry Society)

Sir Geoffrey Keynes: *The Complete Writings of William Blake*  
(Random)

## FORD FOUNDATION GRANTS

James Baldwin  
Saul Bellow  
e.e. cummings  
Robert Fitzgerald  
Stanley Kunitz  
Bernard Malamud  
Flannery O'Connor  
Tillie Olsen  
Katherine Anne Porter  
Theodore Roethke  
Niccolo Tucci

## HARPER PRIZE NOVEL CONTEST (1958)

Robin White: *Elephant Hill* (Harper)

## HARRIET MONROE AWARD FOR POETRY

Stanley Kunitz: *Selected Poems 1928-58* (Little, Brown)

## HUNTINGTON HARTFORD FOUNDATION AWARD (1958)

Robert Frost

## JOHN DAY NOVEL AWARD

Chayym Zeldis: *Streams of Wilderness* (John Day)

## KENYON REVIEW FELLOWSHIPS

Fiction: Robie Macauley  
Poetry: James Arlington Wright  
Theodore Henry Holmes  
Criticism: Thomas Henry Carter

## LEONORA SPEYER MEMORIAL AWARD (Poetry Society)

Mary A. Winter

## MARJORIE PEABODY WAITE AWARD

Dorothy Parker

## NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS (1959)

Fiction : Bernard Malamud : *The Magic Barrel* (Farrar, Straus & Cudahy)Biography : J. Christopher Herold : *Mistress of an Age* (Doubleday)Poetry : Theodore Roethke : *Words for the Wind* (Doubleday)

## NATIONAL INSTITUTE &amp; AMERICAN ACADEMY OF LETTERS

## GOLD MEDAL

Poetry : Conrad Aiken

## NEW YORK DRAMA CRITICS' CIRCLE AWARD

Lorraine Hansberry : *A Raisin in the Sun*

## O'HENRY AWARDS

Short Stories : Martha Gelhorn : *In Sickness as In Health*Hortense Calisher : *What a Thing to Keep a Wolf in a Cage*George Steiner : *The Deeps of the Sea*  
(All Doubleday)

## OHIOANA AWARDS

Fiction : Charles O. Locke : *The Hell Bent Kid*

## POETRY CHAP-BOOK AWARD

Arthur Waley

## PRIX CHRISTIAN GAUSS : PHI BETA KAPPA SENATE AWARD

Criticism : Walter E. Houghton : *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (Yale)

## REYNOLDS LYRIC AWARD (Poetry Society)

John Fandel

## ROSENTHAL AWARD

Bernard Malamud : *The Assistant* (Farrar, Straus & Cudahy)

## RUSSELL LOINES AWARD

Poetry: Robert Graves

## RYERSON FICTION AWARD

Gladys Taylor: *The King Tree* (Ryerson)

## SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION: JOSEPH HENRY JACKSON AWARD

Work in Progress: William C. Wiegard: *The Treatment Man*

## TAMIMENT BOOK AWARD (1958)

John Kenneth Galbraith: *The Affluent Society* (Houghton Mifflin)

## WALT WHITMAN AWARD (Poetry Society)

James E. Miller, Jr.: *A Critical Guide to 'Leaves of Grass'* (Chicago)

## WILLIAM ROSE BENET MEMORIAL AWARD (Poetry Society)

Robert A. Wallace

## YALE SERIES OF YOUNGER POETS AWARD (1958)

William Dickey: *Of the Festivity* (Yale)

## FRENCH AWARDS

## PRIX ALPHONSE ALLAIS (1959)

Georges-Armand Masson: *Chorceaux Moisis* (Stock)

## PRIX DES AMBASSADEURS

Joseph Kessel: *Le Lion* (Gallimard)

## PRIX COURTELINE (1958)

Nicole de Buron: *Les Pieds sur le Bureau* (Flore)

Centenary Prize: Marcel Pagnol

## PRIX DE LA CRITIQUE LITTÉRAIRE (1959)

Dominique Aury: *Lectures pour tous* (Gallimard)

## PRIX DES CRITIQUES (1959)

Yves Regnier : *Le Royaume de Bénou* (Grasset)

## PRIX DES DEUX-MAGOTS (1959)

Henri-François Rey : *La Fête Espagnole* (Laffont)

## PRIX FEMINA (1958)

Françoise Mallet-Joris : *L'Empire Céleste* (Julliard)

## PRIX FEMINA-VACARESCO (1958)

Jean Starobinski : *Jean Jacques Rousseau : La Transparence et l'Obstacle* (Plon)

## PRIX FÉNÉON (1958)

Jean François Revel : *Pourquoi des Philosophes?* (Julliard)

Philippe Sollers : *Le Défi* (Seuil)

Jacques Cousseau : *Le Chien Gris* (Corréa)

Michel Bertrand : *Le Port* (in manuscript)

## PRIX GONCOURT (1958)

Francis Walder : *St. Germain ou la Négociation* (Gallimard)

## PRIX INTERALLIÉ (1958)

Bertrand Poirot-Delpech : *La Grand Dadaïs* (Denoël)

## PRIX LITTÉRAIRE DES LIBRAIRIES DE FRANCE (1959)

Georges Bordonove : *Deux Cents Chevaux Dorés* (Julliard)

## GRAND PRIX DE LITTÉRATURE DE L'ACADEMIE FRANÇAISE

(1958)

Jules Roy

## PRIX MEDICIS (1958)

Claude Ollier : *La Mise en Scène* (Minuit)

## PRIX DE MEILLEUR LIVRE ÉTRANGER (1959)

Lawrence Durrell : *Justine* (Faber)  
*Balthazar* (Faber)

## PRIX MONTYON (1958)

Paul Bouchet : *Le Mystère de Perrière-les-Chênes*  
 C. M. Charpentier : *Le Beffroi des Sancesse et Sancerre*  
 Louis Blond : *La Maison des Jésuites*  
 V. Dupont : *Quand Eve Filait*  
 Alphonse Gaillard : *La Randonnée d'un Pignard*  
 Madeleine Hivert : *Notre Part sur la Terre*  
 Aimé Blanc : *Rien pour moi, Facteur?*

## PRIX DE LA NOUVELLE VAGUE (1958)

Christiane Rochefort : *Le Repos du Guerrier* (Grasset)

## PRIX DU QUAI DES ORFÈVRES (1958)

André Gillois : *125 rue Montmartre* (Hachette)

## PRIX DU ROMAN DE L'ACADEMIE FRANÇAISE (1958)

Henri Queffelec : *Un Royaume Sous la Mer* (Cité)

## PRIX SAINTE-BEUVE (1958)

Henri d'Amfreville : *Naufrage des Sexes* (Corréa)  
 Mongo Beti : *Mission Terminée* (Corréa)

## GRANDS PRIX DE LA SOCIÉTÉ DES GENS DE LETTRES (1959)

Jules Bertaut  
 Paul Tillard : *L'Outrage* (Julliard)

## PRIX THÉOPHRASTE RENAUDOT (1958)

Edouard Glissant : *La Lézarde* (Seuil)

## GRAND PRIX VÉRITÉ (1958) :

Dr. Reboul : *Si Toubib* (Julliard)

## PRIX VERLAINE (1958)

Henri Bernet

## PRIX DES VIKINGS (Biennial, 1958)

Jean-Pascal Benoit : *Kirdi au Bord du Monde* (Julliard)

## IX. SELECTED BOOKS OF THE YEAR

*These lists aim to do no more than record some of the more interesting books published between July 1958 and July 1959. Even this limited task is attempted, in this second year of the Annual's existence, only for British, American and French books. In the case of books published in these countries we have tried to indicate precedences. In future years it is hoped that similar lists can be provided for other countries.*

### FROM GREAT BRITAIN

#### *Fiction*

ACHEBE, CHINUA: *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann

ALLEN, WALTER: *All in a Lifetime*. Michael Joseph

BATES, H. E.: *The Watercress Girl: short stories*. Michael Joseph

BOWEN, JOHN: *The Centre of the Green*. Faber & Faber

BROOKE-ROSE, CHRISTINE: *The Sycamore Tree*.

Secker & Warburg

BURT, NATHANIEL: *Make My Bed*. Gollancz

BYRNE, MARIE: *Softly, Softly*. Anthony Blond

CALLOW, PHILIP: *Native Ground*. Heinemann

CARY, JOYCE: *The Captive and the Free*. Michael Joseph

CAUTE, DAVID: *At Fever Pitch*. Deutsch

CHARLES, GERDA: *The True Voice*. Eyre & Spottiswoode

CHARTERIS, HUGO: *Picnic at Porokorro*. Collins

COMYNS, BARBARA: *The Vet's Daughter*. Heinemann

DURRELL, LAWRENCE: *Mountolive*. Faber & Faber

ELLIS, A. E.: *The Rack*. Heinemann

FARRELL, KATHLEEN: *The Common Touch*. Macmillan

FIELDING, GABRIEL: *Eight Days*. Hutchinson

FREEMAN, GILLIAN: *Jack Would be a Gentleman*. Longmans

FULLER, ROY: *The Distant Afternoon*. Deutsch

GARNETT, DAVID: *A Shot in the Dark*. Longmans

GLANVILLE, BRIAN: *After Rome, Africa*. Secker & Warburg

GREENE, GRAHAM: *Our Man in Havana*. Heinemann

HAWKES, JACQUETTA: *Providence Island*. Chatto & Windus

HUMPHREYS, EMYR: *A Toy Epic*. Eyre & Spottiswoode

JOHNSON, PAMELA HANSFORD: *The Unspeakable Skipton*.

Macmillan

LAMBERT, GAVIN: *The Slide Area*. Hamish Hamilton

LAMMING, GEORGE: *Of Age and Innocence*. Michael Joseph

LESSING, DORIS: *A Ripple in the Storm*. Michael Joseph

LEWIS, MICHAEL: *The Fable and the Flesh*. Weidenfeld

& Nicolson

MAVOR, ELIZABETH: *Summer in the Greenhouse*. New Authors

MCMINNIES, MARY: *The Visitors*. Collins

MIDDLETON, STANLEY: *A Short Answer*. New Authors

MORTIMER, PENELOPE: *Daddy's Gone A-Hunting*. Michael Joseph

MURDOCH, IRIS: *The Bell*. Chatto & Windus

NAIPAUL, V. S.: *Miguel Street*. Deutsch

NEWBY, P. H.: *The Guest and his Going*. Cape

NIN, ANAIS: *Children of the Albatross*. Peter Owen

RAJAN, BALACHANDRA: *The Dark Dancer*. Heinemann

RAVEN, SIMON: *The Feathers of Death*. Anthony Blond

RENAULT, MARY: *The King Must Die*. Longmans

ROSS, WALTER: *The Immortal*. Muller

SANSOM, WILLIAM: *The Cautious Heart*. Hogarth

SELVON, SAMUEL: *Turn Again Tiger*. McGibbon & Kee

SILLITOE, ALAN: *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

W. H. Allen

SINCLAIR, ANDREW: *The Breaking of Bumbo*. Faber & Faber

SNOW, C. P.: *The Search*. Macmillan

SPARK, MURIEL: *The Go-Away Bird*: short stories. Macmillan

SPARK, MURIEL: *Momento Mori*. Macmillan

STIRLING, MONICA: *Sigh for a Strange Land*. Gollancz

STOW, RANDOLPH: *To the Islands*. Macdonald

TAYLOR, ELIZABETH: *The Blush*: short stories. Peter Davies

TREVOR, W.: *A Standard of Behaviour*. Hutchinson

WAIN, JOHN: *A Travelling Woman*. Macmillan

WATNEY, JOHN: *Leopard with a Thin Skin*. Cape

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BORY, JEAN-LOUIS: *Uné par la mer* (Julliard)

BOURBON-BUSSET, JACQUES DE: *Le remords est un luxe* (N.R.F.)

CALET, HENRI: *Peau d'ours* (N.R.F.)

CAYROL, JEAN: *Les corps étrangers* (Ed. du Seuil)

DEL CASTILLO, MICHEL: *Le colleur d'affiches* (Julliard)

DURAS, MARGUERITE: *Moderato Cantabile* (Ed. de Minuit)

ESCHASSERIAUX, BERNARD: *Les dimanches de Ville d'Avray*  
(Grasset)

GIONO, JEAN: *Angelo* (N.R.F.)

GIRAUDOUX, JEAN: *La Menteuse* (inédit) (Grasset)

GLISSANT, EDOUARD: *La lézarde* (Ed. du Seuil)

GOVY, GEORGES: *Sang d'Espagne* (Fayard)

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GRENIER, ROGER: *Les embuscades* (N.R.F.)

JUIN, HUBERT: *Les sangliers* (Ed. du Seuil)

KESSEL, JOSEPH: *Le lion* (N.R.F.)

MALLET-JORIS, FRANÇOISE: *L'empire céleste* (Julliard)

OLLIER, CLAUDE: *La mise en scène* (Ed. de Minuit)

PINGET, ROBERT: *Le Fiston* (Ed. de Minuit)

PINGAUD, BERNARD: *Le Prisonnier* (Table Ronde)

POIROT-DELPECH, BERTRAND: *Le grand dadaïs* (Denoel)

QUENEAU, RAYMOND: *Zazie dans le métro* (N.R.F.)

REY, HENRI-FRANÇOIS: *La fête espagnole* (Laffont)

ROBLES, EMMANUEL: *L'homme d'avril* (Ed. du Seuil)

ROCHEFORT, CHRISTIANE: *Le repos du guerrier* (Grasset)

ROMAINS, JULES: *Le besoin de voir clair* (Lammarion)

SIMON, CLAUDE: *L'herbe* (Ed. de Minuit)

SIMON, PIERRE-HENRI: *Portrait d'un officier* (Ed. du Seuil)

SOLLERS, PHILIPPE: *Une curieuse solitude* (Ed. du Seuil)

TILLARD, PAUL: *L'outrage* (Julliard)

TRIOLET, ELSA: *Roses à crédit* (N.R.F.)

TROYAT, HENRI: *La recontre* (Les semaines et les moissons,  
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VAILLAND, ROGER: *Les mauvais coups* (Sagittaire)

VEDRÈS, NICOLE: *L'exécuteur* (N.R.F.)

VILMORIN, LOUISE DE: *La lettre dans un taxi* (N.R.F.)

WALDER, FRANCIS: *Saint Germain ou le négociation* (N.R.F.)

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AMIEL: *Journal inédit de l'année 1866* (N.R.F.)

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BRECHON, ROBERT: *Michaux* (N.R.F. 'Bibliothèque Idéale')

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FERNANDEZ, DOMINIQUE: *La roman italien contemporain*  
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JOUHANDEAU, MARCEL: *Réflexions sur la vie et le bonheur*  
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MAYOUX, JEAN JACQUES: *Melville* (Ed. du Seuil)

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REVEL, JEAN-FRANÇOIS: *Pour l'Italie* (Julliard)  
ROY, CLAUDE: *La main heureuse* (N.R.F.)  
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VIGNY, ALFRED DE: *Mémoires inédits* (N.R.F.)  
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BONNEFOY, YVES: *Hier régnant désert* (Mercure de France)  
FOUCHET, MAX-POL: *De l'amour au voyage* (Anthologie) (Seghers)  
HUMEAU, EDMOND: *L'Age des processions* (Nouveaux Cahiers  
de Jeunesse)  
IONESCO, EUGENE: *Théâtre II* (N.R.F.)  
JACCOTTET, PHILIPPE: *L'ignorant* (N.R.F.)  
LURÇAT, JEAN: *Mes Domaines* (Seghers)  
MARCEAU, FÉLICIEN: *La Bonne Soupe* (N.R.F.)  
MONHERLANT, HENRY: *Don Juan* (N.R.F.)  
PICHETTE, HENRI: *Les revendications* (Mercure de France)  
SICAUD, SABINE: *Poèmes* (Stock)











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